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RED RENARD THE INDIAN DETECTIVE

OR,

The Gold Buzzards of Colorado.

A Romance of the Mines and
Dead Trails.

BY "BUFFALO BILL"—HON. W. F. CODY.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE GOLD TRAIL.

"Boys, we'll camp here, for there runs our dinner," called out a cheery voice in the wilds of Colorado.

"A hundred to ten you don't get him."

"Yes, ten to one!"

"Put me down twenty to one you don't bag yer game!"

"Gentlemen, I take your bets; he is my game and our dinner," cried the first speaker, and with his words his rifle sprang to his shoulder, a short sight followed, and then came the sharp report, sending a thousand echoes among the canyons, and sounding as though a regiment of men were discharging their weapons.

A yell broke from those who had bet against the shot, as a deer, bounding along full three

"THE RED RENARD THANKS HIS WHITE BROTHER, BUT HE HAS NOT COME TO EAT WITH HIM, BUT TO TELL HIM THAT DEATH LIES ON THE TRAIL HE IS FOLLOWING."

"These gentlemen can do as they think fit; but I never turn back once I take a trail, until I know where it leads," was the calm reply.

"And I goes on, too, for I knows it leads to gold," growled Buck Bradley.

"Your trail will lead you to the gallows some day, Buck; but we won't quarrel on that score now," and King Kendall smiled, and again turning to the Indian, who calmly sat upon his horse the while, continued:

"What is it we have to face, chief, on this trail?"

"Death," was the low response.

"What kind of a death?"

"Does it matter what kind to the pale-face, if it comes?"

"Yes, for I do not care to die at the end of a rope, as will my vicious-faced pard here, nor do I wish to be killed and scalped by Indians."

"Does the pale-face believe in Death Spirits?" queried the Indian.

"Ghosts, you mean?"

"Yes; spirits come back from happy hunting-grounds."

"I confess I do not."

"They are there at end of the trail," and Red Renard pointed toward the mountains where was the destination of the miners.

"Then there I shall go, chief."

"Bah! that Indian knows we is on the right trail for gold, and he wants to scare us off," remarked a disgusted miner, while another added:

"Pard Kendall, we kinder acknowledge you cap'n o' this outfit, and we is willin' to foller your lead, if you says go on."

"So says I, and the Injun knows we is bound to strike it rich, for, pards, if any man in Colorado knows whar the dust is hid, that Red Fox do, and no mistake," said another.

"I'll tell yer what I knows about him," put in Buck Bradley.

All looked toward him to hear him speak—Red Renard also turning his large eyes calmly upon him.

"I knows, pards," began Bradley, "that the Injun are said to know whar the lost gold-mine is. For your benefit, Mister Kendall, even if we did have a few words, I'll tell you that some years ago there was a man came to these parts and prospected alone. Luck went against him at first, but at last he begun to bring in plenty o' gold and sell it to the traders. He said he had struck it rich, and we all knowed he didn't lie, for he traded off more dust than all else in the camp had together. The boys trailed him time and again, and he always covered up the scent, so no one knew where his mine was, but it was suspected to be in them mountains.

"One time he didn't put in an appearance, and soon after he was found dead. He was swinging to a tree, his hands tied behind him, and upon a paper bound over his eyes was written:

"He would not reveal where to find his gold-mine, so he died by the hands of

"THE GOLD BUZZARDS."

"The Gold Buzzards?" queried King Kendall.

"Yes, Gentlemen of the Road who will some day make your acquaintance, Pard Kendall," answered Buck Bradley, with a wicked grin.

"Well, what has all this to do with this Indian?" asked Kendall.

"Waal, folks say that this Injun was the bosom pard o' the Gold Hermit, as we called the old miner, and he can tell just where to find that secret mine."

"Suppose he can, he is not compelled to do so."

"Yes, he knows it, and more—he sees we are going toward it, and that is why he comes after us with his story of the Death Mountain and Spirits," said one of the party, and one who had considerable influence among his comrades.

"Well, gentlemen, we can go on our way and meet what dangers we have to face; but I thank the chief for his warning, though we do not heed it."

"Say, pards, if the Injun knows, and I believes he does, he's jist got to tell," cried one, and as he spoke a lariat whizzed through the air in the rear of the Indian, and his pony springing forward, he was dragged to the ground with stunning force, while, like a pack of yelping coyotes springing upon a wounded stag, the miners rushed upon him.

CHAPTER III.

AT BAY AGAINST ODDS.

"Back, all of you! for I stand this Indian's friend!"

Had any one doubted the ringing words of King Kendall, his attitude was certainly such as to prove that he meant all he said.

Whether he had suspected treachery among his comrades toward Red Renard or not, he certainly had quietly placed himself in a position to thwart it, if one man could do it.

The sudden move against the Indian certainly had not been premeditated.

All knew him well, had seen him often in the mining-camps, and believed that he knew where rich gold-veins could be found.

The legend of the lost gold-mine they had connected him with, and often had men attempted to force him to a confession regarding it, and

just that often had Red Renard proven himself master of the situation.

But now, far from the mining-camps, he had deliberately ridden into their midst, and they felt that he was in their power.

More, he had warned them not to follow the trail they were then pursuing, and this they believed to imply that they were nearing the lost mine.

One of the miners had quietly slipped behind the Indian, and, under a sudden impulse, thrown his lariat, the noose settling over his shoulders.

The result the reader knows, and that there was a rush to bind the fallen chief, now that the first step had been taken, and force from him the secret he held.

But King Kendall was the first man to get to the Indian's side, and, quick as a flash he had turned, and while standing across the body of the half-stunned chief, he warned the miners back in the words that open this chapter.

It seemed that he held forth his hands only to warn the crowd off; but the keen eyes of those who had seen his shot at Buck Bradley detected now a derringer pistol hastily drawn from a pocket in either cuff of his jacket.

The crowd stopped as suddenly as though they had run against a stone wall, while Buck Bradley quickly placed himself behind one of his comrades.

"Ho, Pard Cap'n, does yer intend to go ag'in' yer own blood?" asked Digger Dan, the miner before referred to as having considerable influence among his comrades, while Buck the Bravo, seeing that he had not now alone to face the young miner, cried:

"Yas, he'd go ag'in' his brother for a Injun, for he looks it."

King Kendall made no response to this latter remark, but in answer to the question of Digger Dan, said in his cool way:

"If protecting an Indian from a herd of white cut-throats, is going against my own race, I intend to do it."

"Cap'n, that Injun could make us all rich if he'd only open his mouth."

"If he cares to do so willingly, Digger Dan, all right; I have nothing to say; but if, as you say, he holds the secret of a mine, and will not tell of it, or be bribed to do so, then I for one will not see him forced into a confession."

"I wish we c'd agree with yer, cap'n; but we can't, and I knows the Injun has been offered a fortin' to give up his secret, but refuses, and now we kin make him talk, we is going to do it."

"We is, for a fact," said another, while the rest nodded assent to Digger Dan's words, and Buck the Bravo growled:

"Yes, the Red Renard has got to preach truth about the lost mine, or he's going on a trail for the happy hunting-grounds."

"Well, gentlemen, I say no, and I wish no trouble with you, but I fear it will come. I am a stranger to you, but when you know me better, you will find out that I am one to offer my life where I have given my word, and I say I stand by this Indian."

"Cap'n, you is a game man clean through, to buck ag'in' us as you is doing; but we don't want no trouble with you, and yet the Injun is our game, and it's his gold-mine or his scalp."

By one of those lightning-like movements for which he was noted, King Kendall slipped his derringers back into his sleeves, and drew his gold-mounted revolvers almost before his comrades suspected his act, while he coolly said:

"Gentlemen, you know my decision, so act, don't talk."

Digger Dan looked at his comrades, and they at him.

They felt a great liking for the young miner, and did not wish war with him. His boldness disconcerted them, for they were six to one against him. But they had made up their minds that a fortune was in their grasp, and they would not give it up.

The Indian still lay where he had fallen, and the young miner stood over him, a foot upon either side of his body; but Red Renard was now no longer stunned, but, half-rising upon his elbow, while his arms were still pinioned by the lasso, he regarded the scene with a calm dignity that was indicative of his stoical character.

If it came to a struggle, Red Renard was the man to rise to action; but until that moment he remained a passive looker-on.

"Pard, we'll give you the larger share, won't we?" and Digger Dan turned to his comrades.

"We will, for a fact," was the general response.

"Before I get gold by stealing that of a poor Indian, I'd starve," was the sneering answer.

"Well, what terms do you want?"

"I have no terms to offer, and none to accept. I will kill the first man, or men, who attempts to harm this Indian, and if I die, I'll not be alone, so act quick, for our dinner will burn to a crisp."

Again the men looked at each other, and it was a look of amazement, at a man so placed, as was King Kendall, thinking of something to eat, and rather urging the matter to a struggle.

"I says kill 'em both," cried Buck the Bravo, peeping around the head of a comrade.

With his last word the revolver of King Ken-

dall rung out one sharp, solitary shot, and a cry of pain followed it, while there came the calmly-uttered words:

"Pard Buck, I have shortened that long nose of yours, so that I'll know you by my mark."

With the shot, the Indian had suddenly glided from between the feet of King Kendall and rose to his full stature by his side, his revolvers also grasped in his hands.

If King Kendall had expected to precipitate affairs by chipping off the end of the Bravo's nose, the shot had just the contrary effect, as far as bringing on a combat, for the miners were cowed by his daring, and, at his words, several of them laughed, while the acquisition to the side of Kendall of a man known to be as dangerous an antagonist as was the Red Renard, equalized matters in a way that brought them to terms.

"Well, pards, the cap'n means business, for he spilt Buck's nose and no mistake; but it's got to come to a back-down, one side or t'other, and which are it to be I leaves to you, for if the music opens, there is to be a graveyard started right here in this valley, and we is to furnish ther corpses. Are it a go on with ther cap'n and hunt fer gold, or fight it out fer ther Injun and torture the secret out of him?"

Digger Dan glanced around at his comrades, as he asked the question, and he saw that they were not anxious to press matters, excepting Buck the Bravo, who said savagely:

"I says don't be bullied out o' our rights."

"I will fight you for the Indian, Pard Buck, so take your stand with any weapons you wish; so it is back-down or fight; which shall it be?" and King Kendall stepped toward the Bravo, who said savagely, while he still nursed his wounded nose:

"I hain't in no condition to fight, as you sees."

"Well, then, get out of this camp, for no coward shall follow the trail I do as my pard," contemptuously said King Kendall, and he advanced upon the Bravo with a threatening air.

CHAPTER IV.

A WOMAN TO THE RESCUE.

"HANDS up, sir!" sternly said King Kendall, as he moved quickly toward the bully, who seemed thoroughly cowed in the presence of the man who had proven himself his master.

The others look on amazed, glad to see the turn affairs had taken, for outside of the knowledge that it would be a fight to the death, they cared not to have trouble with Kendall, whom, as I have said, they greatly liked, and now admired more than ever.

Up went the Bravo's hands, and stepping up to him, King Kendall quickly disarmed him, and then said:

Buck Bradley, you are nothing but a cowardly brute, and I tell you frankly, you shall no longer stay with this outfit, and have got to leave it, if you refuse to fight me. If you do the latter, then the best man can remain. Which will you do?

"I'll go," was the low answer, and a laugh of derision broke from the lips of his former comrades, while one cried:

"What, Buck, has your feathers all tarned white, soon as yer meets a man as is yer bos?"

Buck Bradley made no reply, but turned and walked toward his horse, the young miner following him, while the others stood looking after them.

The horse was quickly saddled and Kendall said:

"Mount, sir!"

In silence the bully obeyed.

"Here are your arms, Bradley, and now go your way; but remember, if you so wish it, it shall be war to the knife between us from this day."

"It shall, King Kendall, and I make no idle threat," was the hoarse reply.

"So be it. Now be off!" and he handed the bully his weapons.

A flash of intent to kill suddenly came into the eyes of Buck Bradley, as he grasped the belt of arms; but Kendall saw it, and in an instant his derringer was in his hand, while he said, coolly:

"Don't do it!"

A curse came from the set lips of the man at his failure, and he seized his reins and rode away in silence, followed by a jeering laugh.

Kendall watched him until he was out of rifle range, and then turned to see that the Indian was gone.

"Ha! where is the chief?" he cried.

All turned quickly, and yet no eye fell upon the Red Renard.

He had noiselessly slipped away while the others were gazing upon the scene between King Kendall and the Bravo.

His horse had trotted over to a thicket near by after his master's fall, and stopped there to feed; but he too was gone.

"Let him go, gentlemen, while we discuss our long postponed dinner, and accept my word for it that I am glad we are again friends," said King Kendall, in his cheery way, and Digger Dan at once extended his hand, while another remarked:

"These gentlemen can do as they think fit; but I never turn back once I take a trail, until I know where it leads," was the calm reply.

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"Death," was the low response.

"What kind of a death?"

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"Yes, for I do not care to die at the end of a rope, as will my vicious-faced pard here, nor do I wish to be killed and scalped by Indians."

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"Hal where is the chief?" he cried.

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His horse had trotted over to a thicket near by after his master's fall, and stopped there to feed; but he too was gone.

"Let him go, gentlemen, while we discuss our long postponed dinner, and accept my word for it that I am glad we are again friends," said King Kendall, in his cheery way, and Digger Dan at once extended his hand, while another remarked:

"I'm glad the Bravo has gone, for he was a terror."

"And he means mischief, you bet, for look yonder!" cried Slouchy Sam, and he pointed to a distant hill upon which the Bravo had halted, and now sat on his horse, shaking his fist at the little group of miners.

Having thus shown his hatred toward his former comrades, Buck Bradley turned and rode on directly toward the Death Mountains, against which he had been warned by Red Renard.

But the Bravo seemed familiar with the trail, for he did not hesitate, and turning into a rocky deer-path soon came to a foaming torrent that dashed along at a terrific pace between its precipitous banks, and with a deafening roar hurling its volumes of water over a fall not very far distant.

Across this surging torrent a rude bridge of logs had been built.

It consisted of three long trees, projecting from one shore, or cliff, to the other.

The weight of the heavy ends had enabled the smaller ends to be pushed to a support on the opposite cliff, and the tops were hewn off so as to make a surer footing, while a hand-rail, frail in the extreme, ran along each side.

With ropes and braces the logs had been made quite firm, so that the fragile-looking bridge bore the weight of the Bravo and his horse without any danger of precipitating them into the raging stream beneath them.

It was very evident that the Bravo had crossed that bridge before, as he showed no hesitancy in doing so.

Reaching the other side he stopped suddenly, stood an instant as though in thought, and then hissed forth:

"Curse them! I'll do it, for some of them will die, and that man may be one."

Turning to his saddle, he took from the skirt a small hand-saw, and with this in his hand he retraced his way on foot one-third the length of the bridge.

Then lying down flat upon his face, he reached under the bridge and began his deadly work.

It was slow, tedious; but revenge urged him on, and at length he had sawed the three logs to within a short space of the top.

Over his work, to hide it, he arranged the bark, and then walked back to the bank where he had left his horse.

The logs swerved beneath his weight, and he hastened off of them, and mounting his horse rode on his way, his face full of devilish delight, while he laughed in a bitter way as he thought of his revenge on some of the party back on the trail, and perhaps on King Kendall himself.

Hardly had he disappeared from sight in a distant thicket, when a horseman approached, slowly following his trail.

It was Red Renard, the Lone Sioux.

Reaching the little bridge, he had boldly ridden upon it, and after a few lengths a crackling sound was heard, then a crash, and the Indian and his pony were hurled into the raging torrent below.

That Red Renard knew his danger there was no doubt, for when he arose above the flood his first glance was toward the falls.

His pony was driving along at a furious pace, some twenty feet below him, and struggling hard in the mad waters.

With Herculean strength the Indian strove to reach the bank nearest to him, though it was but a wall of rock.

But in vain his skill as a swimmer—in vain his strength and endurance.

The mad torrent bore him along with the speed of a race-horse straight for the falls, which his pony was nearing with frightful rapidity, and at the same time shrieking with terror as only a horse can shriek in moments of peril.

The face of Red Renard was calm and fearless, for he would meet boldly the death he could not avert.

But suddenly up to the edge of the cliff dashed a horse and rider.

The animal had been reined back suddenly, and the rider had come to see from whence came those terrified screams.

The rider was a young girl and her face paled as her eyes fell first upon the struggling pony and then upon the Indian.

She was dressed in a riding-habit of buckskin, wore a slouch sombrero, and her skin was darkly bronzed; but her face was beautiful, and that she possessed a fearless and resolute nature her actions at once demonstrated.

The moment she beheld the Indian her right hand sought her saddle-horn, and then it was waved around her head, swinging a coiled lasso.

Urging her horse forward into a run she gained the position she sought, and then boldly launched the coil, the well-trained animal at the same moment dropping back upon his haunches and bracing himself to meet the shock, should the lariat not fail.

As the noose left her hand the maiden cried, in fervent tones:

"God guide my lariat, for if it misses he is lost!"

CHAPTER V.

RED RENARD'S RESCUE.

RED RENARD, the Sioux miner, had been in many a deadly peril in his life, and there had been chances in favor of his death a hundred to one; but he had never given up hope but once, and that was when he saw the falls within a few yards of him, and his pony going over them with an appalling cry of terror.

That any human agency could save him then he did not believe, and, with a calmness that showed his fearless nature, he resigned himself to death, his eyes instinctively raised to the bright blue skies above, as though to trace out the trail his spirit must take upon its way to the happy hunting-grounds.

There was much that Red Renard had meant to accomplish, there was much in his life that he had left undone; but death waits for no man, be his skin white, black, or red, and he felt that the moment had come when he must die, die by being hurled among the wild waters, hundreds of feet to the rocks below.

An instant he closed his eyes, and when he opened them he almost felt that he had passed into the Great Beyond.

But no, the roar of the falling waters yet filled his ears, the sunlight yet tinged the tree-tops, the mad torrent still swept him along with lightning speed, the blue skies seemed as far off as before, and a glance showed him his pony on the very verge of death.

But his eyes also fell upon objects that seemed to have appeared as if by magic.

It was the young girl and her pony, whose nerve and daring had determined her upon rescuing the drowning Indian.

He saw her seize her lasso from the saddle-horn, urge her pony to a run until she was near enough to throw it, and then he watched the coil as it came whizzing toward him.

An instant of dread suspense, and it came above him, having been surely aimed, and grasping it with a grip like an iron vise, he awaited the shock that must follow.

Would the lariat part in twain?

Would the pony hold firm against the strain?

These questions flitted through his mind, and then followed one awful second of suspense, and the shock came.

It caused the lariat to cut blisters upon his flesh, but it held firm, and the little pony never wavered, while from the lips of the maiden came the fervent words:

"God above, I thank Thee!"

Instantly the Indian began to aid himself, drawing himself through the waters hand over hand by the lariat.

His palms were blistered, for now and then the surging waters drove him back a few feet in spite of his giant efforts; but at last the steep cliff was reached.

"Hold firm, while I dismount and aid you!" cried the girl, and with a word of warning to her noble horse, she slipped from her saddle, and taking her sombrero from her head, placed it at the edge of the cliff under the rope to prevent the strands from cutting on the sharp rocks.

"Now can you come up?" she cried to Red Renard, still clinging below.

"Yes; me come, t'ank you," was the answer, in the deep tones of the Indian, and he began to climb the lariat.

Bracing herself, the maiden extended her hand, and grasped that of the Indian, all bleeding and blistered as it was.

Another instant and the chief stood by her side, dripping but still dignified and calm, while he gazed upon his observer with a look of devout admiration.

He said nothing, only gazing in seeming speechless gratitude, and his look expressed volumes.

Under it the young girl grew nervous, and broke the spell with:

"Will you come to my father's house and rest after your struggle with the waters?"

"No; me go to my own camp; but me t'ank pale-face lady, and Red Renard be her friend."

"He twice to-day nearly die, and two times been saved, so he have two pale-face friends he won't forget."

"Goo'-by."

Without another word he turned and stalked away, taking a deer-path running along the bank of the stream, and seemingly leading to the valley far below.

In amazement the young girl gazed after him, and then, with a sigh, coiled up her lariat, replaced her sombrero upon her haughty young head, and springing lightly into her saddle started to ride away, when suddenly she saw a horseman ride out of the thicket right upon her:

She was quick enough to see that he was leaning over in his saddle, evidently following some trail, and that he had not discovered her, so, with a lightning-like movement she drew a revolver from her belt, and leveling it full at him, cried in a silvery, but threatening voice:

"Halt! hands up, or die!"

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE GIRL.

"GOSH alive! I am ketched, and by a gal."

"Who is yer, leetle one?"

The speaker was Buck the Bravo.

He certainly was wholly taken aback, and, though a little hand held the revolver pointed at him, he saw that there was not the slightest tremor in it, and that the aim was sure for his heart.

He had gone on his way, after his fiendish work of cutting the bridge, until he came upon a trail that attracted his attention.

It was of a single horse, and the animal was freshly shod, as his experienced eye told him.

The trail was not an hour old he well knew and he determined to see who had made it.

He was aware that he was in a very dangerous locality, for the vicinity of the range the miners called the Death Mountains, was infested with roving bands of Indians, and an outlaw band, known as the Gold Buzzards, were said to have their haunt there, where they could retreat, after committing depredations upon the mining-camps and Overland trails, without fear of pursuit.

Strange stories were told of the Death Mountains, for it was said they were rich in gold veins, and yet, that whoever had there sought to dig the precious yellow metal had lost their lives.

Also, men said, that the spirits of those lost in the search for gold among the fated hills, guarded the mines.

Now, Buck the Bravo had struck a trail coming right out of the mountains, and he was determined to follow it.

His desire for revenge was forgotten in his hope of finding one who might perchance know of the lost gold mine, and he struck off in pursuit most eagerly.

So eagerly, in fact, did he pursue the trail, that he rode out of the thick timber directly upon the muzzle of a revolver, held by the one whom he followed.

It was no wonder then that he was taken aback, and more so, even, to see a woman in that wild, weird land.

A woman, no! but a young and beautiful girl, and yet one who had it in her face to carry out her threat and kill him, if his hands were not put up at her bidding.

"It matters not who I am; but who are you, is the question?" came the calm response of the maiden.

"That is soon told, for I'm a gold-hunter, heading for the Fatal Hills, where I am told there is rich boodle, while, if you wants my name, it is Buck Bradley in these parts, whatever it might ha' been whar I come from."

"Well, Pard Buck Bradley, gold-hunter at large, do you see that trail?" and the young girl pointed to the trail leading along the stream.

"I does."

"Well, my advice to you is to strike it with all haste, and to follow it with all speed away from the vicinity of the Death Mountains."

"Who says so, leetle gal?"

"I do."

"I guess I can live whar a gal can," he said, doggedly.

"I think otherwise, and am so sure of it that I'll prove it to you if you do not obey me!"

"The bridge is bu'sted across the stream."

"Ah! how know you that?" she said, quickly.

"I comed that way."

"How did you cross this torrent on a broken bridge?"

She saw him change color, and added, quickly:

"Was any one on your trail?"

"There might have been."

"Aha! I see it all: you were pursued and cut the bridge to destroy your pursuer; but you did not succeed!"

The man started, and asked quickly:

"Has you seen any one on my trail?"

"I have."

"Who were they?"

"You should know, so why ask?" was the quiet response.

"Yes, I knows, and I don't want to meet 'em."

"That is your lookout; but come, leave this side of the stream, and quickly."

"How can I, with the bridge gone?"

"You must find a way, for you doubtless have been here before."

"I prefers to stay here."

"Well, you can stay here dead, or depart and live."

"Take your choice."

The man saw that he had one to deal with that would stand no trifling.

He still sat upon his horse, his hands raised above his head as he had thrown them up at her first command, and he felt that to disobey would be to bring a shot.

He would not fire upon the girl if he could, for he wished to know who she was and what she was doing in that wild country.

To do this he had but one course to pursue, and that was to depart, or at least to pretend to do so, and he said:

"Well, leetle gal, you has the drop on me, and the look to use it, so I caves and travels."

"If you sees any one looking fer Buck."

Bradley, don't put 'em on my trail, and I'll thank ye.

"Whar you come from, who you is, and what you is doing in this country, I don't know, and I won't make it my business to find out, as you seems to want it to the contrary, so I says a polite good-evening to ye."

With this he turned his horse and rode away, leaving the maiden watching him, and, when he had gone a short distance, changing her revolver quickly for her repeating rifle, which she still kept covering his retreating form.

The Bravo glanced back and saw this, as also that she was slowly following him.

In this she had a motive which escaped him, and he turned into a trail that he knew would lead him back toward the mining-camps, though he had no intention of going thither.

No sooner had he taken this trail than the young girl came on after him in a run, her rifle ready for use.

"Waal, she has forgot somethin'—jist like a woman—and I hopes it hain't to kill me," he muttered, as she suddenly called out:

"Halt!"

"I am halted," and he drew rein.

"Your taking that trail convinces me that you are not wholly unacquainted with this country, and I warn you now to keep out of it in future."

"Is it yourn?"

"Yes; it is my hunting-ground, and I'll allow no intruders upon it, so beware!"

"Has you had your say, gal?"

"Yes."

"Good-evening," and the Bravo rode on his way once more.

Looking back, after a ride of half a mile, and seeing that he was not followed by the young girl, he turned off of the trail, made a circuit of some distance, and then came out at the very spot where he had parted from her.

"Now, leetle gal, I'll jist find out who and what you is, for my opinion are that you is the queen bee o' a hive of gold-diggers in these parts," and with this he started off on the trail left by the maiden's pony.

CHAPTER VII.

A MOST MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

"WELL, cap'n, we've had bad luck on the outfit," said Digger Dan, addressing King Kendall, after the party were again on the move toward the Death Mountains.

"In what respect, Dan?" asked the young miner.

"Why, that cussed Injun, Red Renard, come among us and raised a muss, and then we had to tarn Buck Bradley loose to go it alone in these lonesome hills, and I fears luck is ag'in' us."

"There is but one way to find out, Pard Dan," answered King Kendall, in his indifferent way.

"And what are that?"

"To go and see."

"That are so; but you don't feel shaky then, as the shadows begins to lengthen in these parts?" and Digger Dan glanced about him, as though he was invading the realm of departed spirits.

"Not I, Dan, for I fear neither the living nor the dead."

"Then you is the pard for us to make cap'n o' this outfit; what says you, pards?"

The rest of the band turned in their saddles at the call of Digger Dan, and he continued:

"I says this outfit should have a head to it, and I moves that we make the Dandy Miner here our cap'n, for we knows jist what he kin do, in spite o' his sporty looks, as we has seen him tried."

"Now, I votes him cap'n o' ther lay-out."

"An' so does I."

"Me, too."

"My vote are fer him."

"I wants him cap'n."

Such were the responses of the men, who had certainly come to regard King Kendall with the highest respect, after his bold act of the afternoon, and what they had seen him capable of doing.

The handsome young miner raised his sombrero in acknowledgment, the act displaying his shapely head and waving hair, and said, in his pleasant way:

"Gentlemen, I thank you, and I will endeavor to do my duty as your leader."

He said no more, but coolly rode to the front, heading the line, while Digger Dan took his place immediately behind him.

Thus they continued on their way, their horses in a swinging walk, until the roar of the falls reached their ears.

The trail of the bravo lay before them, and suddenly another trail became visible.

"It is the track of the Indian's pony, for I noted his hoof-marks well," said King Kendall, dismounting and examining it.

"Then ther Lord be easy with Buck Bradley, ef ther red-skin are on his trail," muttered Digger Dan.

"You think he follows him to kill him?"

"Yes, cap'n, for ther Red Fox hain't no Injun ter fool with, and Bravo Buck fooled with him this artemnoon."

"You expulsioned Buck from ther outfit, and ther Renard are on his trail, so it are more than likely we'll find a graveyard by ther way, and Buck will be ther occupant."

"Well, the two are man to man, and may the best one win," said Kendall.

"I guesses the Injun will pour lead into him from the rear."

"No, a man who rode as boldly into our camp as he did to-day is not the one to be an assassin, though his training may have taught him it was right."

"Of the two, I would trust Red Renard first, red-skin though he is— Ah! there is a torrent ahead of us," and the party came in sight of the swollen stream.

"And a bridge."

"Which are bu'sted."

"Gone under, as I are a sinner."

The miners were now standing upon the bank where the heavy ends of the bridge had been.

They were gazing across the stream at the other ends, which still remained in place, and he diagnosed the case with remarkable quickness and truth, for he said:

"Gentlemen, there was a bridge here, as you see, and it was not more than three hours ago that one horseman crossed it in safety."

"The Injun trail leads on to it too, pard cap'n."

"True, Dan, but his weight broke it down, and the Indian and his pony went to their death over yonder falls, and Bravo Buck laid the trap to send him there."

"You think he tampered with the bridge?"

"I know it, for look at the ends of those three logs and you will see his work."

"He knew the Indian was upon his trail, and so arranged to destroy him, or—"

"Or what, cap'n?"

"Or he laid a trap for some of us, who he knew would come this way."

"Ther murderin' sarpint! we'll hev ter punish him with a rope neck-tie when we catches him; but what is to be done, cap'n?"

"Build another bridge, Dan."

"How can we?"

"We have axes, saws, nails and ropes on our pack-horses, there, so what more do we need, for yonder are trees, and we can build the same kind of a bridge."

With this a camping-place was sought, as the banks of the stream indicated that a ford would not be found in many long miles, and selecting four long, suitable trees, Kendall took a sharp ax from the pack-saddle of one of the freight animals and began work with a will.

When the sun set they had the four trees down and trimmed of their branches, and rollers ready to convey them to the bank of the stream.

Then they had supper and sought rest, one of the party standing guard.

With the dawn they were up and at work again, and by noon they had the four smaller ends of the trees across the stream.

Crossing over they drew the ends we'l up on the bank, and then proceeded to hew the tops to make them level, for a good footing for the horses, and steady them by nailing braces across, and a railing upon either side.

"Well, gentlemen, our bridge is complete," said Kendall, with some pride, as they struck off work just at sunset and returned to camp for supper and a good night's rest.

"Yes, we is fixed, now, cap'n, and we can continue on our way in the mornin'."

"Yes, Sam, we will cross to-morrow into the Promised Land, which I hope will prove to be the Eldorado of our hopes," gayly responded King Kendall, and having discussed, with the relish of a man in perfect health, the tempting camp-supper before him, he wrapped his blanket about him and sought his resting-place, bidding Slouchy Sam call him at four o'clock, when his watch began.

This Slouchy Sam did, and the young miner took his post of duty, and began to pace to and fro until the gray light of approaching dawn came stealing over the mountain.

"Now for a look at my bridge," he muttered, and he walked toward the crossing, which was distant but a hundred yards from the camp.

"Good God! what does this mean?" he cried in utter amazement.

And no wonder: *the bridge was gone!*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDNIGHT PROWLERS.

THE loud call of King Kendall upon discovering the bridge to be gone, aroused the sleeping miners, and, with their arms in hand, they rushed to his side.

"Injuns, or spirits o' ther Death Mountains, cap'n?" asked Digger Dan, anxiously, as he reached the spot where the young miner stood.

Kendall quietly pointed toward the spot where the bridge had gone.

"Ther bridge gone!" he cried, in astonishment.

"Ther bridge are gone!" echoed the others in chorus, as they arrived on the spot.

"Gone, clean as a whistle; but how?" said Digger Dan.

"That is the question, for not a trace of the logs we cut are left on either side, that I can see," remarked Kendall.

"Who c'u'd hev did it?" asked Slouchy Sam.

"Ther speerits," was the whispered reply of Digger Dan.

"Nonsense! the hands that 'cut that bridge away were flesh and blood."

"No, cap'n, fer speerit hands is stronger than bone an' sinew o' live folks."

"Dan, you are a superstitious fool, and you are scaring the rest of the men out of their wits, and in broad daylight too; why, when night comes you'll be afraid of your shadows," said Kendall, sternly.

"No, cap'n, but I'll be afeered o' dead folks' shadders, them as cut this bridge down."

"Look there, do you not see that the work was done from the other side? for they were cut there, and let fall into the water, and the force of the torrent dragged the heavy ends off, while the roar of the fall drowned all sound to our ears."

"I'll build another bridge to-day, and to-night will stand guard myself."

"Don't do it, cap'n," earnestly urged Digger Dan, his superstitious fears now wholly aroused.

"I will, and if you all do not care to aid me, I'll build the bridge alone, if it takes me a month to do it."

"Waal, we'll help you, cap'n, but then it do seem like slappin' Providence in ther face to attempt to go across inter ther gold kentry, when ther speerits hev warned us to keep out."

"Well, I'll go, warning or no warning, if I go alone; but I wish aid, and you are not the boys to desert me, I know."

"No, cap'n, we'll be thar with you, so here goes to build another bridge," was the answer, and, while one of the number prepared breakfast the others began work.

With the practice they had had on the other, they worked more in unison, and the result was that nightfall found a second bridge, even more substantial than the other, spanning the wild torrent.

Mounting his horse, King Kendall rode across it, and back, and all pronounced it a very strong structure.

Having had his supper, Kendall led his horse once more across the structure and fastened him in a thicket near by.

Then he recrossed and called to Digger Dan.

"Dan, you are more afraid of ghosts than the rest of your comrades, so you'll be most likely to keep wide awake, and I'll place you on guard for the night on this side."

"Here, sit by this large tree, and, if you make any discovery, give the alarm; but mind you, do not get frightened at your shadow and keep the boys awake all night."

"And you, cap'n?" asked Dan.

"I'll cross to the other side, and keep watch there, and if I see anything to cause alarm, I'll call you, and you call the boys."

"I wouldn't cross that stream to-night fer ther Lost Gold Mine," said Dan, with an earnestness that made Kendall laugh, while he continued:

"Well, I would, so good-night, and keep a watch for spirits, while I have an eye on the living."

"You is on ther side whar ther ghosts will walk, cap'n."

"So much the better, for I have long wished to see one," and King Kendall went to the camp-fire, lighted a cigar, repeated his instructions to the others of the party and crossed the bridge to his post of duty, which was a large tree some ten paces back from the bank of the stream.

The cigar seemed to soothe him, for he sat motionless for a long time, his thoughts evidently roaming amid other scenes than in that wild, weird land.

The camp-fire burned lower and lower, until it flickered out, and a darkness that could be felt seemed to rest upon the scene, for a dense mist arose from the fall and swept along the banks.

The roar of the fall seemed dull and heavy, and nature seemed to be dropping off to sleep.

Suddenly King Kendall started.

His cigar had long since gone out, and he muttered:

"I believe I was half-asleep."

"It is too dark to see the time by my watch, and I have no match."

"Well, I'll see if Dan's ghosts have gotten away with the bridge," and he walked to it.

"No, it still stands, so it cannot yet be midnight, the time when ghosts are said to prowl about the earth."

"Ha! was not that a step?"

"I distinctly heard the breaking of a dry twig, as beneath a human foot."

"No, it is from the direction of the thicket, and was doubtless Comrade; but I'll have a look at him," and he at once walked to where he had left his horse.

The animal was lying down, and apparently asleep, but arose at the approach of his master.

"It was not Comrade, that is certain."

"Well, I'll return to my post and try and keep awake, for I have certainly been asleep—

No, I'll have to look at Dan first."

He crossed the bridge with firm step, undismayed by the madly-rushing waters beneath him, and called out in a low tone:

"Dan!"

"Ay, cap'n, are thet you?"

"Yes; and I'm glad to see you awake."

"Yas; this hain't my sleepy night; but you looked awful white a-comin', and I thought you was a ghost on the bridge."

"No; it is the mist; but have you heard any sounds of a suspicious nature?"

"I hain't; but I expects to, fer it are a 'most midnight."

King Kendall now returned to his post and resumed his seat beside the tree.

In spite of himself, he seemed to be overwhelmed with sleep, and once or twice he seemed to inhale some delicious odor and aroused himself with a start, only to sink back into what appeared a delightful dream, which held him spellbound.

At last his head sunk upon his chest, and thus he remained, while suddenly out from behind the tree against which he sat glided a white-robed form.

No face was visible, and the figure was enveloped in a snowy mantle like a shroud.

Bending over the sleeping sentinel, the shadowy form stood thus an instant, and then crossed the bridge with the same gliding movement, that did not seem like a walk.

The mist was more heavy now, and its chill had caused Digger Dan to draw his blanket about him so that he became comfortable, and the comfort made him sleepy, for he began to nod.

Up behind the tree against which he sat glided the white-robed form, and bent over the sleeping guard.

A moment or so it stood thus, as still as a marble statue, and then the head of Digger Dan was bowed, and he seemed to be buried in deep slumber.

Then, about the bank glided the ghostly form, bending over here, halting there, and then retracing its way across the bridge, where it came upon another shrouded figure.

A sign, but no word seemed to pass between them, and then the two bent over the end of the bridge.

A moment they stood thus, and then came a plunge in the waters, half-drowned by the roar of the fall, and with a grating, tearing sound, the bridge was swept away down the mad torrent, while the ghostly forms glided away from sight in the thicket, just as dawn broke over the distant mountains, and Slouchy Sam arose to see what had happened to the captain and Digger Dan during the hours of darkness.

Reaching the side of Digger Dan, he saw that he sat motionless, all in a heap, and then he took a glance toward the stream, and loud rung out his cry:

"Pards, ther bridge are gone ag'in!"

To the spot hastened his alarmed companions, and they saw that the bridge was indeed gone, while their companion, Digger Dan, still remained as motionless and silent as though dead.

Across the stream they now beheld King Kendall, crouched all in a heap, and still and seemingly dead.

"Pards! they is dead! ther ghosts hev kilt 'em, an' it are time for us ter git out o' this," cried Slouchy Sam in tones of horror, and he was leading the way toward the camp, when they suddenly saw King Kendall move, then throw his arms out wildly, and next stagger to his feet and glare about him like a man gone dazed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MINER'S LAST SCOUT.

FOR full a moment did King Kendall stand gazing about him.

It was evident that he was bewildered, sadly so, and was striving to collect his scattered senses.

At last he shook himself together, as it were, rubbed his eyes and head violently, and walked toward the stream, the miners upon the other bank gaping at him the while in dumb surprise.

Suddenly he stopped, and his eyes became riveted upon the spot where the end of the bridge had been.

"Heaven above! the bridge has gone!" he fairly shouted.

"That are so, pard, and we thought you was dead!" yelled back Slouchy Sam.

"Dead! no, I'm alive, but benumbed with cold; and, now I think of it, I have been dreaming of finding acres of gold, and my head aches savagely; but who cut away the bridge?"

"The ghosts."

"Nonsense! what does Digger Dan say?"

"Thar he sits, just as you did, cap'n."

"Shake him and arouse him."

This was done, and after some difficulty, Digger Dan was awakened, and staggered to his feet.

"Lordy, pards! ther ghost led me ter whar I found gold-mines ter sell— Rats in ther Rockies! ther bridge hev gone!" and his eyes fell upon the bridgeless stream.

"That are so, pard; but ther cap'n are over on t'other side, and he were asleep, too, and he don't know no more about how it come ter go than we does."

Digger Dan looked alarmed, and fearing the party might take flight, King Kendall called out:

"Sam!"

"Ho, cap'n."

"I wish you would get your breakfast, and then start down the stream to find a ford, so that you can join me on this side."

"And us, cap'n?" asked Digger Dan anxiously.

"Go to work at building another bridge."

"Fer ther ghosts ter git away with?"

"No, for you to cross over on, for Sam will reach me before night, I guess, and then we two will watch this end, and all of you the other end, to find out what it is that does all this mischief."

"It are ghosts, cap'n."

"One would certainly think so, but I don't believe it."

"Now set to work, and I'll throw my lasso over the ends of the logs and aid you to draw them over as best I can."

The men went to work once more, and with a will, anxious to get the bridge completed by night, while Slouchy Sam, after a bite, mounted his horse and struck off down the river-bank upon his lonely scout.

The trail he followed led down into the valley, around a spur of the mountain, and he had a fine view of the fall, while he came suddenly upon the dead body of the Indian pony, which the current had forced ashore.

It was mangled and bruised terribly, and the bridle and saddle were gone.

"Ther water and ther rocks didn't take ther saddle and bridle off, that are sart'in."

"Human hands has done that, sart'in."

"But it are the Injun's pony, sure, and ef Red Renard took ther same tumble, I are glad, tho' I doesn't see his carkis lyin' around loose."

"He are a pesky Injun, are thet red-skin, and I'll put a bullet inter him ef he hain't dead, and I sees him; but I guesses he hev tu'k ther trail fer ther happy huntin'-grounds."

Thus saying, Slouchy Sam again mounted and rode on down the stream, anxiously looking for a crossing.

A ride of a few miles brought him to a spot where he could enter the stream, and some distance down upon the other side he saw where he could make a landing.

It was a dangerous undertaking, but Slouchy Sam was a brave man, and boldly made the venture.

The swift current swept him along at a terrible pace, but he aided his horse all he could the while toward the other shore, and at last reached it in safety.

After a rest he wended his way along the other bank, his path going upward at a considerable incline.

Often he would have to leave the stream to flank some rough country, but again made his way back to it.

"I guess ther sun will leave me afore I j'ines ther cap'n; but I hopes not," he said, anxiously glancing toward the west, while he urged his horse to a faster pace.

At length he reached the top of a lofty ridge, and, making his way along it, found that it terminated in a cliff overhanging the sea.

He had to retrace his way, to continue on up the torrent, and, as he turned, his horse started, for a horseman was approaching him.

"Ther Red Renard, by ther Rockies!"

"Come on, yer wild red-skin, fer I wants yer scalp!"

"Me come! want your scalp!" was the calm reply, and the Indian spurred toward him.

The animal ridden by the miner became frightened at the rush of the Indian and his pony toward him, and reared violently.

Red Renard at once drew rein, but his horse had an impetus not easily checked, and, also rearing, his fore feet became interlocked with those of the miner's animal, and thus they stood an instant, the Indian, knife in hand, seeking to grasp his foe, who twice fired his revolver, though with bad aim.

It was certainly a most critical moment, for the animal ridden by the miner began to give way backward, and his hoofs were upon the very edge of the cliff.

"Great God, Injun! I cave, for we'll be over!" cried Slouchy Sam in dire terror, his face white and his teeth chattering, while he now grasped his horse about the neck.

But too late his words, for one hoof of his horse slipped over the cliff, his balance was lost, and the animal of the Indian pressing hard against him, there was no alternative, for they must go over together.

A scream of mortal terror from the frightened animal, a shriek for mercy from the blanched lips of the miner, and over he went, borne by his horse, while Red Renard, slipping quickly from the back of his pony, said laconically:

"Bad pale-face and good ponies go over cliff, yes; but Red Renard take no tumble this time."

CHAPTER X.

THE HAUNTED BRIDGE.

THERE was one thing that surprised King Kendall, regarding the mysterious disappear-

ance of the bridge, and this was that where he had made the ends fast with stout grape-vines, to act as ropes, they had in each case been unfastened from the trees, or pegs, and had gone with the balance of the structure.

"This proves that whoever did the work took their time about it."

"But to-night we will solve this mystery," he muttered, as he worked hard in the building of his third bridge.

With Slouchy Sam away, and Kendall upon the opposite shore, the work did not progress as rapidly as before, and darkness found the bridge still incomplete.

But it was in a condition permitting the men to pass back and forth on, and when night fell, two camps were made close to the ends of the bridge, and the miners anxiously watched for the coming of Slouchy Sam, little dreaming what fate had befallen him.

Late into the night they sat about the campfires, watching and waiting, and then, worn out with their labors, all but those on guard sought rest.

And those two, King Kendall and Digger Dan, as on the night before, sat each on an end of the bridge and waited.

Slowly the hours passed away, and, worn out with their labors of the past few days, and want of rest, in spite of themselves they would occasionally lose themselves in sleep.

Suddenly from out of the pine thicket, not far from where King Kendall sat, appeared a white form.

It was the same shadowy being that had been seen the night before, and with the same gliding motion as then, it came toward the drowsy watchers.

Nearer and nearer, and more noiseless than a breeze passing over the earth, it came until it stood behind Kendall, as he sat upon the bridge, his back against the railing, his feet upon the rocky bank.

Then the two white-shrouded arms were stretched out and seemed to clasp him about the neck.

A few moments they remained thus, and the young miner toppled over to the ground.

By his side lay the form of Denver Dick, a brawny miner, who slept sound and snored like a lion in anger.

Over his form the ghostly visitor bent for a while, and then glided away across the bridge, which seemed not to vibrate under its tread.

Upon the other end sat Digger Dan, and near him, within reach of his feet, lay his companions.

Dan was asleep, that was certain, his head leaning back against the railings.

But one of his comrades, Black Jack, was restless, and, opening his eyes, they fell upon what appeared to him to be a ghost coming across the bridge.

One yell he gave, and springing to his feet he darted away, quickly followed by Digger Dan and his other comrade, who, beholding the spectral being, echoed his cry of affright and pursued his example with an alacrity that was astonishing.

Into the thicket they went, leaving horses, blankets and rifles behind them, and only seeming anxious to get space between them and the appalling vision.

At length they could go no further, for human nature gave out under the strain, and, panting like hard-run hounds, they sat down to rest.

It was a long time before they could find the power of speech, and then Bonanza Bill asked huskily:

"What was it?"

"Ther ghost," answered Black Jack.

"Who seen it?" inquired Bonanza Bill.

"Didn't you see it?" asked Digger Dan.

"No."

"What in thunder did yer yell fer then?" growled Dan.

"'Cause you did, pards; I were a-sleepin' ther sleep o' ther just, when Jack thar opened in my ear like a Comanche and made tracks, and seenin' you git lively, too, and yell a war-whoop, I were with yer, pards, and here I are."

"Waal, I seen a ghost," urged Jack.

"And so did I; he were comin' across ther bridge, Jack."

"He were, Dan."

"Whar was ther cap'n an' Denver Dick?" asked Bonanza Bill.

"Thet I hain't kalkilated ter inform yer."

"I were on watch, and hed jist lookt across ther bridge, and seen all were quiet over ther, when Black Jack turned up, and I know'd suthin' awful hed come ter pass."

"Hed it been Injuns, or road-agints, I'd 'a' been thar with my shootin'-iron; but when it comes ter ghosts, then I is entered on ther race-track ag'in' time, you kin gamble on it."

"Waal, Dan, I waked up and seen ther ghost as it were comin' fer you, and so I give a yell ter skeer it, and here I are."

"You is right, Jack."

"Waal, my opinion are thet yer was both a leep and dreamin' ther sheriff hed yer for yer sins, when ther cap'n comin' across ther bridge, skeert yer inter a race," growled Bonanza Bill.

"Waal, you made good time yerself, seein' as how yer didn't see nothin', Bill; but I are fer one done with this kentry, and ther Lost Gold Mine kin stay lost fer me, as I returns to ther camp whar thar hain't no ghost-sentinels watchin' over gold mines," said Digger Dan.

"And I goes with yer, Dan, arter what I hev seen," firmly responded Black Jack.

"Waal, I goes back to ther bridge as soon as it are light, for I wants my horse, my rifle and camp outfit, and I'll bet we finds ther cap'n and Dick taar, laughin' at us fer a pack o' coward fools," was Bonanza Bill's determination.

"Ef yer waits until daylight, I goes with yer, Bill; won't we, Jack? for I doesn't wish to lose my outfit," said Digger Dan.

Black Jack decided in the affirmative, and the three men sat discussing the situation until it was daylight, when they struck their hurried trail through the timber and began to follow it back to the haunted bridge, as they now called the rude structure across the mountain torrent.

CHAPTER XI.

KING KENDALL'S DISCOVERY.

It was broad daylight when King Kendall awoke to the situation about him.

Again he had been lost in a dreamland of splendor, and seemingly had been roaming amid yellow fields of gold, all his own.

But the waking was accompanied by intense pain in his head, confused ideas, and a feeling of numbness pervaded his whole being.

He opened his eyes, but they seemed at first only to see the light.

Then objects became visible, and he beheld Denver Dick gazing up at him in a bewildered sort of way, as he half-reclined upon his blanket.

"What are the matter with me, cap'n?" he asked.

"I feel seemingly as you do, Dick; or I did yesterday morning," and Kendall rubbed his eyes vigorously.

"Is we goin' to hand in our chips, cap'n?"

"I guess not; but come, let us see what our pards are about."

King Kendall seemed still to speak and act as though in a dream, and it seemed not to have occurred to him to look about the bridge.

Now he turned, and a cry broke from his lips—the bridge was gone.

The cry brought Denver Dick to his feet, and almost appalled the two men stood, for their third bridge had mysteriously disappeared, though guarded at both ends, and more, their comrades were nowhere to be seen.

In the background was their camp on the other shore, their horses lariatied out as they had left them the night before, and the blankets and rifles of Digger Dan lying upon the ground at the end of the bridge.

No fire had been built in the camp, no one was visible upon the other bank.

"My God! what can this mean?" said Kendall, in a low tone.

"It means, Cap, that this here are no place for live men, and I intends ter dig out, and go back to the gold mines whar ghosts hain't seen," said Denver Dick, impressively.

"I am almost tempted to say the same, Dick; but no, I came into these strange wilds for a purpose, and neither the living nor the dead shall keep me from carrying it out—Ha! there come the boys now."

"It are, for a fact, cap'n; but they comes kinder slow, and don't look joyous."

The three runaways were now plainly visible, as they came from the timber, and walked slowly toward the bank of the stream.

"Hello! whar are ther bridge, cap'n?" yelled Bonanza Bill, as the three saw that it was gone.

"That is just what I was going to ask you, Bill," answered Kendall.

"It are gone, that is a fact," said Digger Dan.

"And you were gone, too."

"Yas, cap'n."

"Why?"

"We had reasons."

"They seen a ghost and lighted out, and I went along fer comp'ny sake," laughed Bonanza Bill.

"Come, Dan, what was the matter?" asked Kendall, impatiently.

In a few words Digger Dan told his story, and Denver Dick said emphatically:

"That settles it with me! I goes back to Gold Valley, if I has to give up diggin' and take to keards fer a honest living."

"Them are my sentiments, pards," put in Black Jack.

"Count me in, too," responded Digger Dan.

"And I goes for comp'ny," added Bonanza Bill.

"Well, gentlemen, you seem to have settled upon your course," said King Kendall, with something like a sneer in his tone.

"We has, cap'n, for if we didn't see no ghost, as t'others did, we were under ther spell o' one, and I believes all I has heerd o' this country being haunted, so I gits out o' it," remarked Denver Dick.

"Men, don't act like cowards, but let us remain and solve this mystery," urged Kendall.

"I knows more'n I want to, now, cap'n, you bet, and I goes, and quick, too," said Digger Dan.

"But we must await the coming of Slouchy Sam, for you would not desert him here, and, while waiting, we can again build the bridge."

A chorus came quickly:

"No more bridge-building for me!"

"But how are Dick and myself to get over?" asked Kendall.

"You kin hoof it down t'other bank, while we goes down this side with ther animals, and it won't be long afore we comes to some place whar you kin cross, while we kin also look up Sam, ef ther ghosts hain't got him," suggested Digger Dan.

Kendall urged again the rebuilding of the bridge; but the others would not listen to it, and, with his horse and traps in the hands of the stronger party he had no other course than to yield, which he did, and breaking camp they began their march, Digger Dan and his two comrades, with their horses upon one bank, and the young miner captain and Denver Dick on foot on the other.

"Ho, Dan! strike Slouchy Sam's trail and follow it," cried Kendall, as they moved off, and Bonanza Bill, who was a splendid trailer, took upon himself this duty.

Now and then visible to each other, and then lost to sight for an hour or more, the two parties went on their way, Bonanza Bill shouting across his discovery of the mangled pony of Red Renard.

It was not long after that King Kendall discovered a trail which he at once took up.

"The horse that made those tracks did not belong to our party, Dick," he said.

"That are so, cap'n; but whose are it, then?"

"I do not know; see, it goes down this ridge."

"And here is Sam's trail joining it, cap'n," cried Denver Dick, as a second trail came in view.

"Yes, they both lead along this spur, and were made yesterday."

"Where can Sam be, I wonder?"

"Tarned inter a ghost, mebbe, and ef so, we don't want ter find him," was Denver Dick's serious rejoinder.

Kendall smiled and went on at a rapid pace, to suddenly come to the end of the spur, which terminated in the cliff, over which the two horses and Slouchy Sam had gone.

The hoof-marks upon the ground gave evidence of a struggle, and glancing over, far down upon the rocks, King Kendall beheld the bodies of the two horses and that of Slouchy Sam.

"Dick," he said, solemnly.

"Yas, cap'n," answered Denver Dick, whose head grew dizzy in looking down from the great height, and consequently kept him from approaching the edge of the cliff.

"I have found Sam."

"Yer has?"

"Yes; and he has turned into a ghost."

"Then I is off, Cap."

"Hold on! he lies mangled to death on the rocks, over a hundred feet below, and there are two horses near him."

"Two horses, cap'n?"

"Yes: one is, or was his, and the other animal I do not know."

"Cap'n, this are no place fer us, so let's be off," anxiously said Denver Dick.

King Kendall saw that argument would be useless, so, after looking down upon the sad sight for a few moments longer, he followed Denver Dick on the way down the bank of the stream.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ILL-OMENED VOYAGE.

FROM the cliff where he had met his death, to the spot where he had crossed the river, the trail of Slouchy Sam was easily followed.

Examining the other shore carefully, King Kendall discovered far down the stream a large tree that had fallen and overhung the waters.

"There is our landing-place, Dick, for we can climb the branches to the bank above," he said.

"How is I to get thar, Pard Cap'n?" asked Denver Dick.

"Swim, of course."

"I hain't a duck."

"But you swim, certainly?"

"Not as I knows of."

"Do you mean it, Denver Dick?"

"It are a fact, Pard Cap'n, I can't swim."

Kendall looked amazed, but after a moment's thought said:

"Well, I must make a raft, Dick."

He then selected some pieces of timber which lay about, and with Dick's lariat, which he happened to have with him, managed to tie them together in such a way as to render them capable of readily bearing the weight of both of them.

But Kendall knew that the raft would have to be urged toward the other shore, so took his weapons and clothing off and gave them to Denver Dick, who then ensconced himself upon the frail craft for the dangerous voyage.

"All ready," cried Kendall, and he pushed the raft off into the stream, and away it went with the speed of a race-horse.

But King Kendall was a superb swimmer, and steadily urged it for the other shore until he got it into a current that set directly beneath the branches of the fallen tree.

Fortunately the current was not as swift there as elsewhere, and springing upon the raft Kendall stood ready to grasp the branches as they swept under.

If he failed, if the limbs broke, a narrow pass and a wild torrent lay below them, and certain death seemed imminent.

"Brace yourself, Dick, and aid me; but be careful not to be dragged off, or you are gone," calmly said the young miner, as he took his position, his legs wrapped around the logs of the raft.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the tree, whose branches swept the water, while the trunk, torn from its roots by a storm, was over the edge of the steep bank above.

Nearer and nearer, and at a high rate of speed they went, until the first branch came in reach, was seized by Kendall, and then, with a loud snap, parted and fell upon the raft.

But Dick had gotten a grip upon another limb, and momentarily checking the raft's impetus, Kendall was enabled to get a good hold too, and quickly took a turn with the lariat which held them.

"Scramble up, Dick, and I'll hand you up the arms and clothing," he cried.

Denver Dick quickly obeyed, and had just grasped the last of their traps in his hands, when, with a loud snap, the lariat parted, and the raft went whirling away, carrying King Kendall upon it.

"Lord have mercy! Pard, you is gone, dead sure," cried Denver Dick, in sympathetic tones.

Then back came the answer, calm and confident:

"Get upon the bank, Dick, before the old tree goes, and I'll see what my chances are."

"Waal, cap'n, you has the pluck o' a mount'in lion, that are sartain; but ther Lord help yer, fer Denver Dick kin do nuthin'," called out the miner, as he scrambled up the trunk of the tree to the bank, carrying with him their weapons and Kendall's clothing.

Just as he reached *terra firma* he caught sight of Digger Dan and the rest of the party coming down the bank of the stream.

"Ho, pards, ther cap'n hev gone!" he cried, excitedly, urging them forward by gesture.

"Hev the ghosts got him?" asked Digger Dan, whose thoughts were now constantly running upon the supernatural.

"No, ther ghosts hev got Slouchy Sam though; but ther river hev got ther cap'n; see thar!" and he pointed to the raft, which was now fairly flying along on the bosom of the torrent, while King Kendall, seated upon it, was calmly watching the shores to see if he could find a landing-place.

"Waal, waal, that are too bad, fer them high banks and wild waters further down, means sudden death to ther cap'n," said Bonanza Bill, and the others all joined in his deep regret at what appeared would be the inevitable fate of the plucky young miner.

In a few words Denver Dick told his comrades of their trip down the other bank, the finding of the body of Slouchy Sam far below them on the rocks, and lying near him the two dead horses.

"Waal, pards, this are a country to git out of, that's sartain; but our duty now are to look arter ther cap'n, so let's git along and see if he kin save himself, and if he do, then he are a king bee among men, that are a fact," said Black Jack, and, Denver Dick having mounted, the party moved on at a rapid pace, Digger Dan and Bonanza Bill riding on ahead, leaving the other two to follow with Kendall's horse and the half-dozen pack-animals which they had brought with them, loaded with stores, picks, shovels, bedding, and all else to make them comfortable, in their intended long sojourn among the Death Mountains.

Riding rapidly, Digger Dan and Bonanza Bill soon came to a lofty point, from whence they could look down into the chasm through which the waters rushed with frightful velocity, casting spray high into the air, and tumbling about in a wild and chaotic caldron.

"Thar's ther raft," suddenly cried Bonanza Bill, as the logs caught his eyes, shooting along through the turbulent waters.

"Yas, I sees it; but whar is ther cap'n?" answered Digger Dan.

"He are gone, poor fellow; fer see, ther raft are tarned over and over in ther waters."

"Dan, it are too bad, too bad, hain't it?"

"It are fer a fact, fer he were ther gamest man I ever seen, and ter choke ter death with water are a fearful way ter die."

"Waal, here come ther boys, and my idea is to get out o' this as fast as we can."

"Say, pards, ther cap'n are gone," he called out, as Black Jack and Denver Dick rode up.

The tidings cast a gloom over all, and the quartette became nervous over their losses, and the mysteries that encircled them on their fatal search for the Lost Gold Mine, and they

decided to at once beat a hasty retreat out of the wild region, where death seemed to dog their steps by day, and ghosts were their visitors by night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPECTER SENTINEL.

"PARDS, this trail we is following hain't leading us ter Salvation," said Bonanza Bill, halting suddenly, as a curve in the river led them in a direction opposite to that in which they knew they should go to reach the mining-camps they had left, to start upon their search for the Lost Gold Mine.

"Wisdom you is talkin' now, Bonanza," answered Black Jack.

"Waal, let us lean toward the east, and see if we can't find a trail that will sarcumvent us round inter civilization," suggested Denver Dick.

"Pards, it are hungry time, so if you'll just camp here for dinner, I'll take a leetle scout all by myself and see if I cannot strike a path over these hills, and once we strike the valley beyond, we can have no trouble," and Digger Dan's suggestion being acted upon, he rode away alone, while the others halted for dinner, for it was growing late in the afternoon.

A ride of a mile brought Digger Dan to a canyon penetrating into the high range of hills they had been anxious to cross, and he boldly penetrated it.

As he progressed, he saw the canyon narrowed, from almost a valley at its mouth, into at times a chasm between precipices.

The sides were overgrown with pines and other trees, and a small stream clear as crystal, ran down the canyon to plunge over a fall below in the valley and join the foaming river.

"This is the very place for gold-finding," said Digger Dan, who when alone, always talked aloud to himself, and yet at such times completely dropped the strange dialect of the border, a fact that showed he was not the ignorant individual he might appear to one seeing him in a mining-camp.

In fact, Digger Dan had been reared a gentleman, and adversity alone had driven him to the West, where he had so thoroughly devoted himself to work that he had become known as Digger Dan, for day and night he used his pick and shovel.

Superstitious by nature, his life in the wilds and mining-camps had rendered him more so, and he had come to trust in good and evil omens to guide him through life, and began to most thoroughly believe in spooks and spirits, as did also half the miners he dwelt among.

Bonanza Bill, Black Jack and Denver Dick had been his intimates, and they had frequently discussed together the propriety of starting on a search for the mysterious Lost Gold Mine, which for two years or more had been the talk about the camp-fires.

Then King Kendall had appeared upon the scene, and thrown in the mess with Slouchy Sam and Buck Bradley, they too began to discuss the chances of finding the mine, which rumor had it, it was fatal to hunt for.

King Kendall had urged the search warmly, and thus the party had secretly prepared themselves for the trip and a long stay in the Death Mountains, and one night quietly stole away from the mining-camps upon their perilous expedition.

Buck Bradley and Slouchy Sam were the disturbing elements of the little party, for Denver Dick was a brave, but harmless fellow, Black Jack was a comrade to trust in, and Bonanza Bill was lucky in finding gold, in fact, his "finds" had gotten him his name, but was wont to give it all away.

As to King Kendall, as I have before said, he was a stranger to all in the mines, and yet was liked by all, and also dreaded, after he had shown himself one not to be trifled with.

Now, as he rode along up the canyon, Digger Dan saw his hopes of wealth fading away, for the search for the Lost Gold Mine had proven a *fiasco*, and more, Buck the Bravo had been driven out of their fellowship, Slouchy Sam had met with a violent death, King Kendall had been lost in the river, and utterly demoralized, they were more than willing to return to their old camps and dig away as best they could for a living.

It was a bitter blow for Digger Dan; but with the mysteries hanging about that region, with the forests haunted by ghosts, and death attending their way, he would not have continued on the search for even the Lost Gold Mine itself.

Suddenly, as he rode along, he drew rein, and glanced earnestly down into the little stream.

Then he sprung from his horse and thrusting his hand down into the clear waters, drew out a quantity of shining metal.

"A gold-pocket, as I am a sinner!"

"And a cool hundred at one grasp," he cried, eagerly, and again he thrust his hand into the "pocket" and drew out the remaining pieces of gold.

On up the stream, he wended his way, finding here and there a "gold-pocket," until suddenly a darkness and chill fell upon him.

He looked up quickly and saw that he had

passed into a narrow passageway of the canyon.

The rocks nearly met far above his head, the sides were covered with moss and stunted trees, water trickled down the walls, and the place, shut out wholly from the sunlight, was as dark as twilight, damp and cold.

Before him another canyon appeared, narrow, wild-looking and dark, and from it a rivulet came gurgling forth to join the brook by which he stood.

"There is gold there in quantity, I'll wager my life on it," he cried, eagerly.

But suddenly he sprung backward, grasped the rein of his horse, threw himself into his saddle and sped back down the canyon like a frightened deer.

His companions heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs, and prepared for an attack, when up he dashed, white as a corpse.

"Pard, in the name of natur', what are ther matter?" cried Bonanza Bill, quickly, as Digger Dan threw himself from his horse.

"Pards, I hes struck it rich; see thar! it's ther pure metal; but I seen ther ghostly sentinel as stands guard o' it, too, and you bet I come away."

His teeth fairly rattled together as he spoke, and he held out the little pieces of gold he had found.

"Yaller gold, as I lives!"

"Pure metal, by ther Rats o' ther Rockies!"

"It's dust and no mistake," were the cries of the miners at sight of the gold, while Digger Dan said:

"But the ghost?"

"Durn ther ghost, when rich metal kin be found," Bonanza Bill said, earnestly.

"What were it you seen, Dan?" asked Black Jack, whose dark complexion, black hair and eyes had gained for him his *sobriquet*.

"I seen a ghost, Jack, and it were seated on a rock, all dressed in its shroud, and apparently standing sen'inel over a cave behind it.

"It d'd look to me like a Injun ghost; but I were so skeert I didn't lose no time taking his photograph, but lit out; but now, as I remembers, I believes he were a-guardin' ther Lost Gold Mine, and are a ghost sentinel."

"Dan, is you in 'arnest as ter what yer seen?" impulsively asked Bonanza Bill.

"I are, fer a fact, and ef you wants ter see it, jist go thar."

"Pards, my idee are ter camp whar Dan found this metal, and if the ghosts comes fer us, then we can light out and lose no time; but ef not, then we can see what thar is fer us in that cave," suggested Bonanza Bill.

After some parley the course was decided upon, the party, in consideration of the gold shown by Digger Dan, concluding to risk one night in the canyon and see what the result would be.

With this determination, eating dinner, they saddled up and moved on slowly toward the canyon, Digger Dan acting as guide.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNHEEDED WARNING.

"PARDS, yonder is ther canyon, and I confesses I doesn't like to go in thar for ther night," said Digger Dan, drawing rein, as he came in sight of the huge canyon penetrating into the mountains, and which he had followed with such success in gold-finding.

"Dan, I has to see a ghost afore I leaves yonder canyon, for I camps thar this night," said Bonanza Bill, firmly.

"You doesn't go alone, Bill," put in Black Jack.

"And I are with yer, pards, for maybe Dan had ghosts in his mind arter ther past two nights, and didn't really see nothing," added Denver Dick.

"Dick, I confesses that ghosts has been on my mind o' late; but I hain't no durned fool ter take a jack-rabbit fer a mule, or a white rock fer a spook.

"I tells yer I seen a speerit, and ef you sees more o' em ter-night, don't forgit thet I wanted ter go on ter ther camps, and not stop here."

"Ef it wasn't fer ther gold yer found, Dan, I'd say go; but it are temptin' enough ter make me risk seeing a speerit," said Black Jack.

"Then on we go," and Digger Dan again led the way.

In a short while they entered the mouth of the canyon, and continued on Dan's trail along the stream.

Already it was growing somber in that secluded spot, shut in as it was by high cliffs, the tops fringed with pines, and with only the sunlight gilding their tops far above their heads.

A deathlike silence seemed to pervade the place, for not even the chirp of a bird was heard.

There was not a breath of air to sigh through the pines, and the little brook ran along without the slightest murmur.

"This are quieter than a Injun buryin'-ground," said Bonanza Bill, in almost a whisper.

"Yas, it are a boss place fer ghosts," answered Digger Dan, in the same low tone.

"Pale-faces go back!"

The words rung out clear as a trumpet, and brought the party to a sudden halt.

"Look thar!"

It was Bonanza Bill that spoke, and in a hoarse voice.

All eyes were turned to where he pointed, and the one who had uttered the warning words was plainly visible.

"It are ther Injun—Red Renard, ther Sioux miner!" cried Denver Dick.

Upon a cliff jutting into the canyon, and much lower than those that formed the walls of the narrow glen were a horse and rider.

Still as statues they were, the Indian and his blood-bay pony forming a beautiful picture.

It was without doubt Red Renard, and seemingly mounted upon the very horse the miners had seen lying mangled upon the rocky bank of the little river.

The arm of Red Renard was upheld, as though warning them back, and from his lips had come the words:

"Pale-faces go back!"

"Thunder! I thought thet Injun were dead; but as he hain't he soon shall be!" cried Black Jack, savagely, and his rifle was at his shoulder, his finger on the trigger, before any one could prevent.

The sharp crack of the rifle followed, awakening a thousand echoes in that wild glen, and with the report Red Renard was seen to throw up his arms, reel backward, and fall, while his pony turned and dashed away out of sight.

"Great Lord! Jack, you hev done wrong," cried Bonanza Bill.

"Yas, we c'd hev tuk him alive, and made him guide us ter ther Lost Gold Mine," said Denver Dick.

"Now we'll hev a visit from thet Injun's ghost this here night," anxiously put in Digger Dan.

"Pards, I guesses I war a leetle too soon, fer ther Injun did know whar thar were gold; but it are no use weepin' o' spilt blood, fer he are dead, as yer knows I never misses, an' my bead covered his head; but, as he do carry consid'ible o' dust on his pusson, I'll try and git up thet cliff and pocket it, along with his scalp."

So saying Black Jack endeavored to scale the cliff upon which the Indian and his pony had appeared, like statues; but this he found impossible, and the party, unheeding Red Renard's warning, moved on again up the canyon.

Coming to the place where Digger Dan had found the "gold-pocket," further search was made, and each of the party made a successful find, so they concluded to go but a short distance further and then camp.

This resolution was carried out, and, after staking out their horses and arranging a temporary camp, they set to work and searched the stream for gold until nightfall, but not one of them extending their hunt up toward the little canyon where Digger Dan had seen the specter sentinel.

When twilight fell they adjourned to their camp, built a large fire and began to count over their gold finds, congratulating themselves upon their success.

After a while they tired of this, and set about preparing supper.

But in spite of their determination to remain and search the canyon on the morrow they were all nervous, as Digger Dan's anxious glances up the canyon and pale face impressed the others.

They knew Dan was no coward if he had to face a mortal foe, and, to use an old expression, they were well aware that he had not been "born in the woods to be scared by an owl," so his manner made them fidgety.

Black Jack had several times expressed his regret for killing the Red Renard, and each time Digger Dan had suggested that they would have the Indian miner's ghost to deal with before they left the canyon.

"Nothing but death and ill-luck has haunted us, pards, since we started in the search for the Lost Gold Mine, and I confesses now ter feelin' queer, and wishin' as how we hecn't comed inter this canyon," said Bonanza Bill in an impressive way, and this, from such a source, added to the discomfort of the others.

They had shot plenty of game, and the flavor of boiling meats and boiling coffee would have been most inviting under ordinary circumstances, but now there was not one of the quartette that appeared to have any appetite, and they did not move with the alacrity of hungry men when Denver Dick said:

"Supper are ready, pards."

Just then there sounded through the canyon a wild, unearthly shriek, followed by a roar that was appalling.

Then came ringing war-whoops, savage roars, intermingled with shrieks as from lost souls.

The four miners sprung to their feet in mortal terror, and glanced up the canyon from whence the sounds came.

Suddenly there shot into sight a huge white object.

It was a grizzly bear, white as snow, and, horror of horrors! upon its back was what appeared to be a ghost, for a white-shrouded form was there, the robed arms extended, and the hands grasping spectral-looking revolvers.

From the huge red mouth of the giant grizzly

came the savage roars as he came down the canyon toward the camp, and the war-cries and shrieks seemed to come from a hundred throats.

"Great God! pards, it are ther Spirit Sentinel o' ther Lost Gold Mine!

"Fly fer yer lives, fer powder and ball are no use thar!"

Digger Dan uttered the words, and appalled, he darted away down the canyon followed by his terror-stricken companions.

CHAPTER XV.

KING KENDALL'S NERVE.

WHEN King Kendall was swept away upon the raft, leaving Denver Dick in the branches of the tree, he did not at first consider his situation one of desperate danger.

In fact, the young miner was a man that looked upon ordinary perils with contempt, and he had been so often in situations where he had only himself to depend upon, and escaped, that he had come to feel confident of his own powers.

Upon each side his eyes now turned, as the raft was whirled along by the current, in the hope of finding some break in the wall-like banks, where he could gain a footing.

But none such presented itself, and he began to feel that the raft must go into the rapids, and be with it.

Would the frail support stand the ordeal? was the next thought.

He looked at it carefully, and then at the tossing, foaming, surging waters ahead, and was compelled to confess to himself that he did not believe that it would.

Still the raft was his only help, and to it he determined to cling unto the last.

The stream now began to narrow, and rocks were visible ahead, and King Kendall knew that a few moments more must settle the question whether he perished or was saved.

Could he run the rapids in safety, he did not doubt but that not very far below he would find some place where he could land.

Crouching on the rear part of the raft, to steady it, he awaited the result with a calm courage that was manly in the extreme.

There was no anxiety on his brow, no repining at fate, no wishing to dodge the inevitable, but a stern resolve to face whatever was before him.

The first rocks were come to, and the raft flew by them as though on wings.

Then the torrent tossed about like a caldron, and rocks reared their cruel heads upon all sides.

Suddenly there came a crash, the raft flew to pieces, and King Kendall disappeared beneath the waters.

Rising to the surface he struck boldly out for life, and was borne by the current near the bank he had desired to reach.

Suddenly, while passing between a large rock and the precipitous bank, his hands touched something beneath him.

He grasped it with the strength of one who held on for life.

It was a huge log, or rather the trunk of a tree, for the rocks had stripped it of its branches.

Wallowing, plunging, rolling, sinking, now on the foamy top, now beneath the surface, the stout trunk was borne, and still King Kendall clung to it.

Now and then it would strike a rock, with a shock that would shake his hold loose; but again he would seize it, and away would fly his life-buoy, with a speed that was appalling.

A less experienced swimmer could never have held on, as did King Kendall, or stood the dashing waters in his face and the tax of strength.

But the young miner had been reared upon the sea-shore, and had breasted, for hours at a time, the mad surf of the Atlantic, and, but for the jagged rocks and whirlpools, the trip down the torrent would have been sport for him.

At last the terrible gantlet of the rapids was run, and the log floated in comparatively smooth water, though still borne swiftly along.

Grim, stern and smiling, King Kendall sat astraddle of his log craft, his broad breast and arms scratched, bruised and bleeding, and many a cut in his white flesh, from contact with the scarred tree and rocks.

But his strength yet remained and his nerve had not deserted him.

Again he sought a landing-place along the shore, for the one where his comrades were was the only chance for him he knew, for naked, weaponless and without food, he must die if left alone in that wild land.

At length he saw a break in the rocky, wall-like bank ahead, and leaving his support he swam toward it.

He felt that he had been hardly used for he was stiff and sore; but his strokes were vigorous, and at last he reached the coveted spot.

It was, after all, little better than the cliff-like sides; but he was enabled to get a footing, and then sought to climb up the precipitous wall, as soon as he had gained strength enough by a rest.

Clinging close to the rocks, and momentarily expecting to lose his balance, and fall back into

the stream, he at last reached the summit and sunk down upon the mossy bank utterly prostrated.

For some time he lay thus, and then, as he saw that the shadows of evening were approaching, he rose and limped away to search for his companions.

At last, just at sunset he found their trail, where it turned into the canyon, and cheered with hope he hastened on until darkness shut out the tracks from his view and he was compelled to halt, for fear he would go wrong in the night.

Utterly worn out he threw himself down amid a cluster of leaves to sleep, and was soon in deep slumber.

How long he slept he did not know; but he was awakened by a loud roaring, war-cries and shrieks, coming down the canyon, while past him, with the speed of deers, flew four shadowy forms.

Behind them, apparently in chase, was a large white grizzly, and on its back a human form, seemingly a phantom from the grave.

On sped pursued and pursuers, and when they had passed, almost dazed by what he had seen King Kendall sprang out of his covert and darted up the canyon, for in the condition he then was he almost fancied that he had indeed seen the spirits of the dead.

Only a short distance had he gone when there suddenly broke upon his vision a bright light.

"My God! it is a camp-fire, and it is real," he said.

A moment he stood gazing at it, and then advanced toward it.

"It is the camp of my comrades.

"Ho, Dan! Dick! Jack! Bill!"

He called each name aloud; but no reply came, other than the neigh of a horse.

"Comrade's neigh, as I live! and the camp deserted.

"Ha! those four shadowy forms I saw fly past me were none other than my comrades.

"But what was that in pursuit?"

"I give it up, and do not blame the boys for running, and fear they'll keep on until they go over the bank into the river.

"Ah, Comrade, old horse, it does me good to be near you again, though I am not in full-dress costume.

"But I soon will be, for here are my clothes and all; ay, and a good supper, cooked to a turn.

"Now I am in luck, and once I make myself at home here, I do not fear any graveyard ghost that walks, specter grizzly or the devil," and the daring young miner hastily dressed his wounds, drew on his clothes, and, seating himself by the fire, set to work to enjoy the supper which his comrades had left behind them in their flight from what they had supposed to be a specter grizzly, with the ghost of Red Renard mounted upon his back.

As he sat there, wholly indifferent to danger, two pairs of eyes were fastened upon him.

From beneath one of these pairs of eyes came a low growl, and the huge grizzly became visible, as he emerged from the thicket on the other side of the canyon.

But a tall form robed in white sprang to his side, a low, stern order was given, and the savage beast walked slowly along on his way up the glen, the ghostly being halting and looking earnestly upon the little camp and its single occupant, seemingly so utterly oblivious to all peril.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

"PARDS, we has cleared the canyon, and I is dead beat," panted Black Jack, as the four fugitives, running in couples, and all four close together, at last found themselves out of the canyon.

"Yas, them un'arthly howls hes shet up ahind us, and I doesn't bear no pitter-patter o' chasin' feet, so I calls a halt," answered Bonanza Bill, slackening his speed to a walk.

"I c'u'dn't run much further ef ther king o' ghosts were arter us," chimed in Denver Dick.

"Pards, our legs hes saved us this far, and I moves we keep 'em moving, for ther were a savage couple we seen arter us," urged Digger Dan.

"Waal, let's walk on, but not run, fer I'm used up. Oh, Lordy! pards, but what were it we seen?" asked Black Jack.

"A ghost!" whispered Dan.

"Does yer mean ther grizzly were a ghost, too?"

"Thet I doesn't know; but who but a ghost c'u'd ride a grizzly?"

"I hain't arguin' ther matter as to ther rider, Dan; but ther grizzly—my! but didn't he git over ground?"

"I s'pose he hev stopt ter chaw up our hosses," suggested Denver Dick.

"An' thet howlin' specter o' a human bein', as oughter be in his grave, are doubtless chawin' up our supper, ef ghosts eats," Bonanza Bill rejoined.

"Waal, pards, what is we ter do now?" asked Digger Dan.

"Git an' keep a-gittin' until we strikes ther camps, and ef any durned fool finds me a-leavin' thar ag'in, except ter return ter old Kentucky with a fortin o' gold-dust, then I hopes to be shot by thet Injun's ghost and hev ter ride ther specter grizzly clean ter Kingdom Come," almost savagely said Bonanza Bill.

"Does yer believe that ther ghost were ther dead Injun?" asked Black Jack, nervously.

"Yas, fer I hes heerd thet Red Renard's war-cries afore, and it were his ghost as give them on'arthly whoops ter-night, Jack.

"I are awful sorry I kilt him, pards," was Jack's repentant response.

"Yas, and so is we; but you is a ha'nted man, Jack; but here we is at the river, and here we better stay until daylight come, for we is in a awful fix in my opinion," and Bonanza Bill seated himself upon a fallen tree.

The others followed his example, and long and anxiously they talked over their gloomy prospects for the morrow.

But human nature at last gave out, and one by one they slipped off of the log and spread themselves upon the ground to sleep, their desperate situation making them almost callous to further peril.

Bonanza Bill was the first to awaken, and the sun was just rising.

He awoke his comrades, and they gave a sigh of relief when they saw that it was daylight.

Denver Dick alone had his belt of arms, and these were their only protection.

Their horses, blankets, food, and all else, they had left behind them in their wild flight.

Truly they were in a pitiable plight, for many long miles lay between them and the mining-camp known as Bonanza City, which they had been anxious to leave to better their fortunes, and were now more anxious to return to.

They gazed at each other listlessly, each one wishing for the other to make a move or a suggestion for the good of all.

They had certainly been terribly alarmed, and were really unnerved by the visits they had received from what they could not now doubt was naught else than spirits of the dead.

Had they been in deadly peril from men, they would have been able to face their foes without a tremor; but fighting ghosts was a different thing altogether.

"Specter grizzlies don't fight," at last said Digger Dan.

"Thet one didn't, and I almost wish he had, fer this kind o' life among ghosts and spooks I doesn't enjoy," put in Bonanza Bill.

"Pards, my idee is, as we has no breakfast to git, no packing to be done, and a long road ahead of us, we had better be making tracks for Bonanza City," Black Jack said, with the air of one who felt that his proposition would be unanimously carried.

"So says I, Jack; but how about a leetle effort to git our horses and traps?" Bonanza Bill suggested.

"Who'll go after them?" quickly asked Digger Dan.

That was the question, and it was a clincher, for no one volunteered, while Digger Dan continued:

"You wouldn't git me into that canyon a third time for all ther gold in thar.

"I went won't alone, and I got away; I went ther second time with you, pards, and here I am; but I'll never try it ag'in, not I."

"Waal, let us quit talk and take a walk, and thar's poetry fer yer, and ther trail leads ter Bonanza City.

"Here goes," and Black Jack arose and set off to follow the trail up the river toward the Haunted Bridge, and thus back over the way which they had come.

"Ho, pards! look thar!" suddenly cried Digger Dan, as they were all moving off.

Digger Dan had his eye set for ghosts, and had cast a last look toward the canyon, and his gaze had fallen upon a moving form in the distance.

Through the undergrowth they all beheld a number of moving objects, but could not distinctly see what they were.

"Ghosts!" suggested Dan, tremulously.

"Nary! they is hosses; and if they be ther Gold Buzzards we is done fer," said Bonanza Bill.

"Pards, it are our outfit!" cried Denver Dick, as he suddenly caught sight of his own horse through an opening in the trees.

In astonishment they all waited, their eyes riveted upon the spot where they must appear.

Suddenly into view came a horse and rider.

"Ther cap'n!"

Three voices thus spoke in chorus.

"His ghost!" huskily said Digger Dan.

With one accord, they were about to bound away in flight, when loud and cheery came the words:

"Ho, pards! how are you?"

Not a word was spoken by the four miners in reply.

They stood like statues, gazing upon King Kendall, as he rode toward them, followed by their horses and the pack-animals.

They had last seen him, as they believed, go down in the rapids.

His raft had been tossed about like a chip,

and that mortal could escape from such a maelstrom they could not believe.

Now he came to them, dressed in his clothes, which Denver Dick had brought to camp, riding his own horse, and bringing with him their horses and camp equipage.

It was more than they could understand, and they stood like men dumfounded.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS.

AS King Kendall approached the group of miners, they appeared like men about to bound away in flight, or who had been brought to bay through sheer desperation.

"Is this the welcome an old pard gets, who comes to you, as it were, from out of the depths and the grave?" called out the young miner.

It was, however, an unlucky speech, for out of the grave was just where they thought that he did come from.

Had it been dark, or even approaching night, the superstition-ridden quartette would have taken to their heels at breakneck speed.

But they now, with the bright sunlight shining full upon them, managed to keep their legs from running off with them.

King Kendall, remembering the four shadowy forms which he had seen dart by him the night before, and the cause of their fright, appreciated their situation and broke forth into a hearty laugh.

He was sore from his bruises, but he was no man to mind trifles, and having had a good rest and food, he was in the very best of humors, so said:

"Pards, you evidently take me for a ghost, but I assure you that I am not."

"Now come; what ails you all?"

He had ridden up to them now, and Bonanza Bill was the first to answer:

"Pard, didn't you git inter them rapids yesterday?"

"I certainly did, Bill, and only by one chance in a hundred got out."

"But *did* yer git out, cap'n?" asked Digger Dan.

"Did I? Why, Dan, don't you see me?"

"It's you for a fact, then, and not your ghost?"

Again Kendall broke forth in a ringing laugh.

"Let me get my grip on you, Dan, for you all seem frightened out of your wits— There— does that seem ghostly?" and he gave the arm of the miner a grasp that made him wince with pain, while he went on:

"I struck a log lodged against some rocks in the rapids and my weight set it loose, and I rode it through, though it was worse than a bucking broncho, I assure you.

"I reached a landing at last, and struck your trail, following it until dark, when, being in undress uniform as you know, I crawled under the leaves like a bear, to keep warm and sleep until morning.

"I was awakened by unearthly yells, saw four shadowy forms, that looked like miners, dash by, and—"

"Yer saw what were arter us?" eagerly asked Digger Dan.

"Yes, a grizzly with a man on his back."

"It were a phantom grizzly and a ghost."

"They made a heap of racket, Dan, for ghosts," laughed Kendall.

"Waal, you kin laugh, cap'n, but they made that much racket we thought there was hundreds of 'em, and that a whole Injun graveyard had sprung a-leak and were arter us."

"Those were the echoes in the canyon, pards; but I confess that there seemed to be scores of grizzlies and hundreds of red-skins from the noise they made."

"They made that much noise, cap'n, that we intends to git out o' this kentry as fast as we kin go, and we was jist starting when we seen yer coming."

"But we is glad ter see yer didn't die in ther rapids, and we is ready ter start, for we w'dn't stay another night in these parts fer ther Lost Gold Mine."

"You do not intend to desert me, pards?"

"No, but we intends ter depart in peace, and lose no time about it, cap'n."

"You won't help me to build another bridge?"

"No, sir, my bridge-buildin' fever hev got cured," firmly said Black Jack.

"Then I shall have to hunt Red Renard up and see if he won't show me the Lost Gold Mine, for you say he knows where it is."

"If he didn't know yesterday, he does ter-day," was Bonanza Bill's significant remark.

"What do you mean, Bill?"

"Waal, cap'n, he sprung himself upon us as we went into ther canyon and called to us ter go back, when Black Jack here jist put a bullet inter him."

"Killed him?" angrily said Kendall, his dark eyes flashing fire.

"Waal, he dropped off o' his pony, and we concluded that it was his ghost as was riding the grizzly last night, for he hed ther Red Renard war-whoop down mighty fine."

"Black Jack, you had no right to kill that Indian, for he was not harming you, only warning

you out of a country; the poor fellow looked upon as his own."

"I came into these mountains to hunt for gold, and I believed my comrades could be trusted; but you are a set of cowards, afraid of your own shadows, while you are ready enough to shoot down a poor Indian."

"Buck Bradley I drove out of our camp, Slouchy Sam has gone, and if you remain with me you have got to do my bidding, and if not, you can take the back trail for Bonanza City whenever you wish."

"That are the trail we intends to take, cap'n," said Denver Dick.

"Well, you are a lot of fools, for I found gold in yonder canyon, as I went through it, and your fortunes are before you, if you remain and work; but if not, you can go as soon as you please, *but I remain.*"

"Cap'n, does you mean ter say that you intends ter remain here if we goes?" asked Bonanza Bill, who with the others seemed to feel subdued, and had not taken offense at Kendall's plain words.

"I do."

"Alone?"

"Certainly."

"Don't do it, cap'n," and even Black Jack joined in the appeal.

"Will you remain with me and make your fortunes?"

"Not fer all ther gold in ther hills would I stay another night here, cap'n," earnestly said Digger Dan.

"My Bible sentiments," responded Bonanza Bill.

"I'm with yer thar, pard," chimed in Jack.

"Count me on ther back trail, pards, tho' I does hate ter desert yer, cap'n," added Denver Dick.

"Well, gentlemen, we part company, for I remain, and, as you return to where stores are plentiful, I will buy you out at a good price of all excepting what you need for the trip back to Bonanza City."

"Take mine and welcome, cap'n."

"And my share."

And the others joined in saying the same; but King Kendall would pay for the outfit, and liberally, too, and, as the others were anxious to depart from that land of mysteries, he bade them farewell and saw them ride away, still urging him to join them.

But he had made up his mind to remain, and nothing could move him from his purpose, so he stood gazing after them, a stern resolve stamped upon his handsome face, as he muttered:

"I will remain here and solve these strange mysteries, if I lose my life in the attempt."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE RIFLE'S MUZZLE.

"I GUESS I've got yer now, King Kendall!"

The man thus addressed turned quickly, and took in the situation at a glance.

It was all against him.

The quartette of miners had disappeared from sight some moments before, and he still stood where they had left him.

He had bought their shares in the outfit, consisting of a tent, ample stores, picks, shovels, axes, bedding and ammunition, while, as they were returning to civilization, he had gotten their horses to serve him, while they rode back the pack-animals.

The extra weapons he had also purchased, and all lay in a heap, his own belt of arms, which he had taken off, as one of the wounds in his side pained him, hanging on the horn of his saddle.

Thus, without a weapon near him, he saw a man leveling a rifle at him, and heard his ominous words.

That man was Buck Bradley, the Bravo.

His horse was some distance behind him, and he had sneaked up to a position near Kendall, having seen the other miners ride off, and the defenseless condition of the man whom he now hated with all of the spiteful venom of his evil nature.

But King Kendall did not change countenance, nor did his face even pale.

He acknowledged to himself that he was fairly caught; but he intended to put a bold front on the matter, so said in his free-and-easy way:

"Yes, Buck, you've got me now, that is certain."

"And I intends ter kill yer!"

"So you said when last I saw you."

"You takes it all-fired cool."

"I shall meet my fate as a brave man should, while you, when brought face to face with death, are a coward!"

"Oh, you can call me names, for I won't quarrel with a dying man; but I is awful glad I come on ye, and the trick is mine."

"And so am I glad, Buck."

"Does yer want ter die?" asked the Bravo, in surprise, at the remark of Kendall.

"Oh, no!"

"Then why is yer glad?"

"I suppose you know that Bonanza Bill and the other boys have deserted me, for you doubtless saw them ride away?"

"I seen 'em."

"Well, they have gotten frightened of their own shadows, and have gone back to Bonanza City."

"Whar I is going, too, for I has seen shadders in these parts I don't half-like."

"Ah! you have seen them, too?"

"Yas."

"What did you see?"

"Ghosts."

"Well, I don't mind ghosts, so I intend to stay, and that is the reason why I was glad to see you."

"What has I got to do with it?"

"I want you for company."

"Me?"

"Yes, for I know where there is plenty of gold, and, having bought the outfit from the boys, I intend to follow the lead I struck and make a fortune."

"Waal, ef you don't talk like a whole brass foundry, I'll give up my scalp ter a Injun!"

"Here I has my rifle a-coverin' your heart, has told yer I intends ter kill yer, and you runs on about being glad ter see me, diggin' fortunes in gold, buyin' outfits, and the likes, when I knows yer ter be ther same as a dyin' man."

"Then you will not join me, and go pards in my gold-find?"

"No, I won't!"

"You had better do it."

"No, I won't!"

"You will lose a good thing."

"I'll find ther gold-dust arter I has had your funeral."

"So you are determined to kill me, Buck?"

"I is."

"I'll haunt you."

The Bravo shuddered, and it was very evident that he too had seen strange sights in that land of mystery.

"Waal," he said, slowly, "one ghost hain't no wusser than another one, so I kin stan' it, fer ther short time I remains in these parts."

"Then you will lose a fortune from your desire to kill me."

"I'll git yer diamonds and ther gold yer has, which hain't no small amount, while I'll take yer hosses and outfit over to another camp and sell 'em, so as ter fetch in a considerable inheritance by your death, not ter speak o' ther joy o' my revenge on yer."

King Kendall saw that the Bravo had made up his mind to kill him.

To prevent it he was utterly powerless, for the bully had his rifle cocked, and it was a repeater.

His coat he had thrown aside, or he would have had the derringers in his cuffs to use, and he would have risked a shot, and doubtless with success, for his movements were quick as the lightning's flash, and his aim deadly.

Now he stood wholly at the mercy of the villain.

He had hoped to interest him in the gold-mine and thus gain him over, when he intended to again set him adrift, for he cared not to have the life of the man upon his hands.

But the Bravo was cunning.

He knew that he could follow the trail of King Kendall and thus find the gold-mine, if the young miner had in reality found one, while the diamonds he wore, with his other jewelry, and the price of the horses and traps would bring him in a considerable sum.

Then, too, he wished to kill King Kendall, for he was revengeful in the extreme, and he would not forego this pleasure to himself.

Again, he was fearful that Kendall might turn upon him, once he had him on even terms, and having weighed all these things rapidly in his mind, he decided to kill him.

King Kendall had made up his mind that the Bravo meant deadly work; but if he could catch him unguarded, he would spring upon him, unarmed as he was, risk a shot, and trust in his great strength to end the matter.

Of course the chances were fearfully against him, for Buck Bradley would strive hard to make his aim sure.

"Well, Buck, you refuse my offer?" asked Kendall, in the same indifferent manner in which he had before spoken.

"I does, and I means ter kill yer, so shout yer prayers!" was the malignant response of the Bravo.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHO FIRED THE SHOT?

WHEN Buck Bradley, the Bravo, told King Kendall to "shout his prayers," as he meant to kill him, he meant just what he said.

This the young miner saw, and he was preparing for a spring upon his intended executioner, with the intention of risking the shot as his only chance for life, when suddenly a whirring sound was heard, followed by a cry from the Bravo, and the dropping of the rifle from his hands.

But hardly had the weapon struck the ground, when King Kendall was upon the Bravo with a mighty leap, one hand clutching his throat and the other, having drawn the bully's own knife from his belt, held it above him, while he hissed forth:

"Now, Buck Bradley, we are on more equal terms."

Seeing that the Bravo offered no resistance, Kendall hastily disarmed him, and then threw him backward with a force that sent him flat upon his back.

"Is yer goin' ter kill me dead?" whined the bully.

"I should do so," was the cool reply.

"I is wounded now and I wonder who fired this arrow?" and the Bravo drew from his arm, where it had buried itself to the head, a long arrow, which had struck him just as he thought of pulling trigger on King Kendall.

"I do not know who fired it; but it came just in the nick of time for me, and I thank the one who did it," and Kendall glanced in the direction from whence had come the shaft, but saw no one.

"It came from yonder thicket," said Bradley, pointing to a clump of underwood nearly a hundred yards distant.

"And it was well aimed."

"Yas, and I knows ther shooter."

"Who was it?"

"Does yer see that leetle fox carved on the side?"

"Yes."

"It are painted red, yer see."

"Ha! the Red Renard?"

"Yas, he hev his weepens marked with a red fox, and he were the one as jest shooted me."

"Then be on your guard, for his aim may be truer next time."

"Now I'll spare your life once more, and give you fair warning not to cross my path again."

"Here are your weapons, so mount your horse and go!"

The Bravo's face shone with delight, for he had certainly not expected mercy; but he was of a brazen nature, and said:

"You don't want me fer a pard in yer gold-mine, does yer, cap'n?"

"No."

"Thet are honest, but—"

The Bravo stopped short, for he did not like the look in Kendall's eyes.

He knew that he deserved no mercy at his hands, and he feared that he might go too far, and he picked up his weapons and walked toward his horse.

King Kendall already had recovered his own rifle and held him covered with it, and the Bravo seemed only anxious to get away.

Mounting his waiting horse, he rode off without another word, though the look on his face spoke volumes.

As he disappeared from sight, Kendall muttered:

"Now I will hunt out a safe camp for myself, for I have work to do."

"But first let me see if I can find that good Indian to whom I certainly owe my life."

He went toward the thicket from whence had come the arrow, but found no one there.

Nor could he discover any trail whatever, good trailer that he was.

"This is strange, for the arrow certainly came from here," he said, and again he made a thorough search of the thicket, but without avail.

There was no other spot within a quarter of a mile from whence the arrow could have come to strike the Bravo as it did, and yet not the slightest trace could he see of any one having been in the little clump of timber.

"It is certainly one of Red Renard's arrows, for here is his mark upon it."

"And yet Black Jack says he killed the Indian yesterday, so what does it all mean?"

"This seems to be another mystery for me to clear up, and I'll begin by going to the spot where Jack says he fired upon the Sioux."

With this Kendall went back to his horse, and collecting the animals together, mounted Comrade and set off for the canyon.

The fact that he had seen strange sights there during the past night did not deter him in the least, but rather urged him on, for, scouting all superstition, he was anxious to find out just what it was that could approach so near the ghostly and yet be of earth.

From what the miners had told him, he readily found the cliff on which Red Renard had been when Black Jack fired at him.

But to scale it he found was no easy task, yet, as he regarded the wall of rock he muttered confidently:

"It can be done."

Having arrived at this conclusion, he staked his horses out to feed, and then taking several lariats bound them securely together.

The cliff projected out from the main spur of the mountain almost in the shape of a huge steamer, being some seventy feet in height, narrow at the valley point, and broad at the base where it joined the higher cliffs.

Fastening an iron stake-pin to one end of the lariat, Kendall began to swing it in a circle about his head.

He had already coiled the line at his feet, and, increasing the velocity of the pin more and more, suddenly sent it flying upward through the air.

It fell upon the top of the cliff.

Pulling it back again he tried again, and again it was a failure.

His third attempt sent it clean over the point of the cliff, and there it hung on the other side, dangling some thirty feet from the top.

Then taking a lariat, after a number of unsuccessful throws he at last caught the pin in the coil and drew it down within reach.

Making one end fast to a small pine, Kendall then went to the other side and began to climb up the lariat.

With the agility of an old seaman, he went upward, hand over hand, and at last reached a footing near the top, from whence he easily climbed upon the summit of the cliff.

As he reached the top he fairly started, for his eyes fell upon the body of an Indian lying near.

"Great God! it is the Red Renard, and he is dead!"

"Who, then, fired that arrow into the arm of the Bravo?" he cried, with evident emotion and surprise combined.

CHAPTER XX.

DRIVEN FROM THE TRAIL.

I WILL now return to the time when we left Buck Bradley, the Bravo, in his effort to follow the trail of the strange and beautiful young girl who had come upon him so suddenly and unexpectedly in the mountains.

Having seen her depart, and given her the impression that he intended to at once leave the mountains, he drew rein and began to "consider ther sarcumstances," as he expressed it.

He had, it is true, penetrated into the Death Mountains twice before, for he took big chances for the finding of gold, and then it was that he had discovered the Haunted Bridge, as the miners had called the span across the mountain river.

Who had built it the Bravo did not know; but bad weather had driven him away on one occasion, and the loss of his stores by his camp getting on fire at another, and thus he had not been able to follow up his gold trail until the opportunity offered to go with the Kendall party.

The secret of his discovery he had kept to himself, and upon his third visit, when driven out of the camp by King Kendall, he had suddenly found out that the Death Mountains had one occupant, at least, and that one was a young girl.

She had held the winning hand against him, in their meeting; but he did not doubt but that he could readily trail her to her abode, and find out who her companions were, for he could not believe that she was there alone.

As to her being there, and those with her, he had but one idea, and that was that they had found a mine and were working it in secret.

He had, however, discovered the secret of their being there, and it was now his intention to find out who they were, how many he had to deal with, and the value of their gold find.

"They've struck it rich, I'll bet high, and it w'd be a nice thing to scoop in thar leetle pile."

"Ef they is too many fer me, I'll let ther boys inter ther secret and claim lion's share on doing so, and then we can make a clean sweep."

"Now ter trail thet gal, fer ef she are foolish enough ter think she hev driven me out o' this country, she are a sadly mistook leetle one."

It did not give the Bravo any trouble to follow the trail left by the young girl, for he was a thorough plainsman and mountaineer, and readily kept on her pony's tracks.

After riding several miles he came to a halt.

"Waal, she are lost sart'in, fer I hev been riding zigzag fer an hour."

"Wonder ef she'd thank me fer showing her ther way?"

Again he rode on, and after several miles more once again drew rein.

"Rats o' ther Rockies! ther gal makes me dizzy, fer I hev been riding in a circle fer a hour."

"Fu'st it were zigzag; now it are round and round, and I wonder what will be ther next racket?"

Once more he resumed his way, and for the next hour he seemed to be doubling upon the trail, until suddenly he halted in deep amazement.

He had come out just where he had started from.

"Waal, thet gal hev been lost, thet are sart'in and, as far as ther good I have done, I might hev waited fer her here."

"Waal, waal, it are a hard thing ter find out jist what a woman is going ter do."

"Hello, thar are ther trail leadin' off in another direction now, so I guesses ther gal knows ther way to her home, and I'll know it, too, afore long."

The trail now branched off obliquely from the way it had before led, and following it for a few miles straight into the very depths of the mountains, the Bravo suddenly drew rein, while he gave a low whistle as his eyes fell upon the pony the girl had ridden.

But the saddle held no occupant.

"Whar is ther gal?" he muttered, as he rode toward the pony.

Then he quickly came to a halt as the idea struck him that she might be behind some tree or rock calmly drawing a bead on him.

The pony stood looking at the miner in surprise, and awaited his approach without fear.

The reins were tied up, so as not to get under the animal's feet, and there was no indication that the pony had either thrown his rider or broken loose when hitched.

Suddenly, as the Bravo got within a few feet of him, the pony uttered a loud neigh, wheeled as though on a pivot, and darted away through the timber at a breakneck speed.

Buck Bradley was well-mounted, and put spurs in pursuit.

Could he catch the pony he did not doubt but that he could mount him and he would carry him to the home of his fair rider.

But catching the little animal was no easy matter, as the Bravo soon discovered, for his horse was distanced, the pony running through the timber at a pace which his pursuer dared not force his horse into to follow him.

After awhile the little horse disappeared over a mountain ridge, and, upon arriving there, what was the surprise of the Bravo to discover him, a long distance down the other side, and behold upon his back none other than the young girl!

"Of all things this do beat," he muttered, in his amazement, as he gazed upon the pony and his rider quietly descending the mountain, and the latter apparently unconscious that he was upon her trail.

Watching her from this point of lookout, he saw her enter the valley and disappear in a clump of timber that grew in the mouth of a large canyon.

"Leetle gal, yonder are your home, and I'll be thar this night ter visit yer," said the Bravo, and he dismounted to rest his horse and himself.

The sun was just setting as he again started upon the trail; but he had no need of following the pony tracks then as he had seen where the pony had disappeared.

Straight to the timber he rode, but it was growing dark rapidly, and he did not strike the trail there as readily as he expected to do.

A search failed to find any tracks, after they entered the timber, and he felt compelled to camp for the night.

Selecting as good a place as he could, in the darkness, he wrapped himself in his blankets and laid down to sleep, for he dared not build any fire there, not knowing how far distant the girl and her friends might be.

How long he had slept he did not know; but he was awakened, he thought, by a groan.

He started to his feet and grasped for his rifle.

It was gone!

He then felt for his revolvers, but his belt of arms was not about his waist!

"Good Lord! am I dreaming, or am I awake?" he cried, as the perspiration stood in beads upon his face.

He moved about, to convince himself that he was awake, and upon turning beheld a white-robed form standing by the tree where he had slept.

"Heaven have mercy, it are a ghost!" he fairly groaned, and he stood riveted to the spot, his eyes glaring upon what really seemed to be a dead form risen in his shroud from the grave.

A moment the shadowy-looking being remained motionless, and then one arm was raised slowly and pointed out toward the valley.

"Oh, I'll go, ef thet's what yer mean, and I'll go soon," fairly moaned the Bravo, and nerv-ing himself, for he was all of a tremor, he started to leave the timber by the way he had entered it.

Looking back, he saw that the white figure was following him, and he cried out:

"Don't yer see I is on ther back trail, pard? so don't come arter me."

Suddenly it flashed across the Bravo's mind that he was unarmed, and was leaving his horse, so he called out:

"Can't I get my weepens and horse, Pard Ghost?"

Again the arm was raised in silence, pointing toward the valley, and Bradley stepped ahead at a lively pace, calling back:

"Never mind, you kin hev 'em."

As he reached the edge of the timber, to his amazement a horse stood hitched there, and as he sprung to his saddle, he found hanging to the horn his rifle and belt of arms.

Driving his spurs deep into the side of his faithful horse, he sped away at full speed, anxiously glancing back to see if he was followed.

But the spectral-looking form had not left the timber, though this circumstance did not cause the Bravo to slacken his speed until his tired horse could go no further.

"Waal, old horse, I s'pose I hes ter give yer a rest; but I hes seen thet this night I didn't believe in afore, and ef any more ghosts puts in an appearance, you may expect ter see me git and leave yer."

"Now I'll build a fire, and a rousin' one, fer fires skeers off mosquitoes and snakes, and maybe it will ghosts," and the Bravo soon had a

roaring fire started, and sat down before it to meditate upon what he had seen, for he dared not go to sleep, and in fact could not if he would.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEVIL'S TOLL GATE.

IN spite of himself Buck, the Bravo, began to nod with sleep, for the firelight made his eyes heavy.

But again he was awakened suddenly, and by what seemed in his ears, deadened as they were with slumber, like a piercing shriek.

He sprang to his feet in alarm, and was momentarily blinded by the firelight; but soon he was able to see the trees not far off, and among them the same white form that had driven him from his camp in the valley.

One arm was outstretched as then, and pointing, as though ordering him away.

Shivering with terror he sprang to the side of his horse, which he had left saddled and bridled, and again took to flight, nor did he halt until the sun was well up in the heavens.

Then he sought a temporary camping-place, for both his horse and himself sadly needed rest, and, after cooking his breakfast and staking his horse out to feed, he laid down and went to sleep.

It was hours before he awoke, and mounting he pressed on, anxious to put as many miles as possible between himself and the Death Mountains.

It was dark when he reached the mountain river, and not daring to venture across, he again camped for the night.

But it was late before he closed his eyes, and several times he started up with the thought that the ghost was near him.

But he failed to catch sight of the white-robed form, and the night passed away without his seeing the dread specter.

As he left the Death Mountains further and further behind him, he grew bolder, and finding a place where he could cross the river, though not without considerable danger, he did so, and went into camp on the other shore, determined to take a good rest.

That his fellow-miners, from whose company he had been driven, were then not far from him he did not know; but the following morning, when starting on his way once more, he was surprised to see them in the distance.

Hastily he sought shelter, and watching them saw that four of them were preparing to depart, while King Kendall remained behind.

Instantly he made up his mind to attempt to kill the young miner, and how he failed in carrying out his intention the reader already knows.

After being allowed to depart by Kendall, the Bravo set off on his way with the air of a man who had a definite object in view.

He made a circuit of the mountains, and pressed his horse along at a good pace, not drawing rein until nightfall, when he went into his solitary camp.

With the first streak of dawn he was again in the saddle, and continued on his way until he entered a wild defile of the hills, when he suddenly came to a halt as he beheld a horseman not far in advance of him.

"Ho, Badger, are that you?" he called out, as the horseman also came to a halt.

"It are, Buck; but whar has yer been, fer I hev been ter Bonanza City ter see yer, and were just on my way back ter ther nest ter tell ther cap'n yer had skipped," and the man rode alongside of the Bravo.

He was a hard-featured fellow, with grizzly gray hair and beard, the dress of a miner and armed like a pirate.

"Waal, Badger, I are on my way now to ther nest, for I hes been off on a leetle scout all by myself, and hes news for ther cap'n," answered the Bravo.

The two men now rode along a well-marked trail that led into the mountains, circling around the side of one and gradually rising.

It was too narrow for two to ride abreast, so the man Badger dropped to the rear.

As they went along the path became dangerous in the extreme, for, hardly more than a yard in width, it looked sheer down hundreds of feet, and a false step of the horse would hurl him to death instantly.

"Badger, I are a trifle shaky in ther narves, so I intends ter dismount at ther Devil's Toll Gate, as I hev passed through thet o' late thet I did not think c'u'd be seen by mortal eyes," and so saying the Bravo dismounted from his horse, and going behind him seized firmly hold of his tail.

"Now I guess I kin shut my eyes and pass through ther Devil's Gate, without paying ther toll I has seen other fellers called on ter pay."

"Yas, thar has two pards lost the'r heads since you left Buck, and gone over ther brink; but I didn't think you was one o' ther skeery kind," said Badger, still keeping his seat in his saddle.

"I hain't, o' general thing; only wh't I hes seen upsets one's narves, Badger."

"But yer say yer has been ter Bonanza City?"

"Yas."

"Been ter draw ther dust on ther waluables tuk in fer ther past month, fer I knows ther cap'n allus sends you."

"Yas, he knows he kin trust me, fer I never steals from pards."

"Did yer hev much ter dispose of this time in ther way o' booty, Badger?"

"Yas, considerable, fer we cleaned out two coaches on ther Overland last week, and then pickings among ther dust-hunters hev been pretty good, so I hes a few thousand about my clothes, and ther boys at ther nest will have a pow-wow over it ter-night when I gits thar; but go slow if yer head feels dizzy, Buck, fer thar are ther Devil's Toll Gate."

The Bravo glanced ahead. His horse was trudging faithfully along, stepping with great care, and evidently accustomed to the work of danger while the Bravo clung to his tail.

The path was growing narrower and narrower, and ahead turned sharply around a curve, where it was hardly more than two feet wide.

Above the path the rocks overhung in solid masses; but below, a misstep would send the unfortunate man or horse hundreds of feet.

Going around that short curve many a man or horse had lost their lives, and thence it was called the Devil's Toll Gate, and well it deserved the name. There, standing with the curve to protect him, one armed man could have kept back a hundred.

In their constant going up and down the deadly roadway, those who traveled it had become callous to its dangers, and rode the whole distance, even around the curve, their horses also becoming seemingly reckless, though they were not in reality so.

Badger had smiled derisively when the Bravo dismounted, and retained his seat in the saddle.

As they approached the Devil's Toll Gate Buck Bradley seemed to grow more nervous, and Badger called out to him:

"Go slow, Buck, or you'll give Satan yer life fer toll."

"I are awful narvous, Badger, so don't crowd me," was the answer in a tremulous tone, and several times the Bravo seemed to stagger.

But his horse held on his way unswervingly, reached the curve, halted, pressed his side hard against the rocks, and went around it in safety.

Clinging to him, the Bravo fairly staggered after him, but passed in safety around the deadly turn.

Badger had drawn rein for an instant, and then thrown one leg over the horn of his saddle, sitting sideways, when his well-trained horse had moved on once more.

Reaching the bend the animal clung close to the curve, the rider following his example, while he put up his hand and grasped a rope which, hung upon an iron ring, ran along upon a couple of lariats twisted together, and serving as a safety-line to a man should his horse slip from under him.

The faithful animal's head was around the curve, when suddenly the Bravo sprang forward, seized his bit, and with a violent effort, hurled him from the dizzy height.

A wild shriek of terror burst from the animal as he went downward, and a curse hissed through the lips of the Bravo as he saw Badger clinging to the safety rope and slipping to the shelf.

Instantly he sprang forward and dealt the man a savage blow upon the head with the barrel of his revolver, and without a groan, Badger sunk in his tracks, and was prevented from going over the cliff by the iron like grip of the Bravo upon his clothing, and who, by his murderous act, had suddenly come out in his true colors as a murderer and highway robber.

"Now, Badger, I'll claim ther dust you carries about yer, and it will swell my leetle pile considerable," he muttered, as he bent over the body of his victim and began to search his clothing.

But, as he did so, he suddenly stopped in his fiendish work, for there came to his ears the click, click, of iron against rock.

Some one was coming, that was certain, for he could not mistake the sound of a hoof upon the rocky shelf.

Was the horseman coming up or down? How many were there? What should he do?

With these thoughts surging through his mind he crouched over the body, savage as a wolf about to be driven from its prey.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ROAD AGENTS' TOLL.

SITUATED as he was, just at the turn on the mountain-side known as the Devil's Toll Gate, Buck Bradley, the Bravo, could not at first tell from which direction came the sound of approaching hoofs.

If the horseman was coming down, of course one of the horses must go over the cliff to death, for two men could hardly pass each other there.

As the reader will discover, there were signals that were to be made by any one going up or down the deadly path, ere they ventured upon their perilous journey.

These signals, the blowing of a horn from below, if going up, and from above, if going down, prevented two persons from meeting, and death to one, or at any rate to one of their horses, from ensuing.

Both Badger and the Bravo had neglected to give this signal, although they passed directly by the niche in the rock where the horn was kept for the use of all.

The one who was then approaching the Toll Gate, it seems, had also neglected this wise precaution, or, if he had sounded the signal from above or below, the Bravo, in his excitement, had not heard it.

Waiting a moment, and listening attentively, he soon knew that the sounds came up the path-way.

Quickly he dragged the body of his victim around the curve, and seizing his rifle from his saddle-horn, for his well-trained horse awaited him with his utmost patience, he took his stand out of sight around the bend.

Louder and louder sounded the clicking of the iron-shod hoofs upon the rocky shelf, or path-way, and soon a horseman came in sight.

It was customary for those ascending and descending the path upon horseback to pause just before reaching the Devil's Toll Gate and arrange themselves sideways in their saddles, so that their horse could press as close as possible to the rocky wall in turning the curve.

The horseman halted, and as he did so the Bravo muttered:

"Whoever he are, it's his last trip up this path, fer Satan gits him fer toll."

Then the horse moved forward once more, and, as his head reached the curve, suddenly a rifle-barrel peered around it, and along the barrel glanced the evil eye of the Bravo.

The horse slightly started and came to a halt; but the Bravo started also, for the horse held no rider.

"Durnation!" cried the intended murderer, half-stepping in view, and as he did so an arrow cut its way along the side of his head, making an ugly wound and stunning him for an instant's time, nearly causing him to lose his balance, and causing the finger upon the rifle-trigger to give a jerk that exploded the piece.

The ball penetrated the brain of the horse, and he swerved one side and over the edge of the cliff, to dart downward in a heap.

As he did so, down the path and around the next curve, sped a human form, disappearing from sight before the Bravo could get a shot at him.

But that he recognized the one who fled, his exclamation and words showed, for they were:

"Holy smoke! it are the Sioux Miner!"

For some moments the Bravo stood silent and thoughtful.

It was evident that he was surprised, for he muttered after awhile:

"Thet Injun were a-trailin' me, and, when he stopped his horse awhile ago it were to slip over his rear and let ther horse come fu'st."

"When I halted him, he thought he'd run upon an outpost o' ther Gold Buzzards, I reckons, and so lit out back down ther trail, while his horse went over ter perdition."

"Waal, waal! I must keep my eyes opened all ther time, ef I is ter be ha'nted by ghosts at night and red Injuns by day."

"But he's gone, thet are sart'in, an' I'll jist borry ther dust thet Badger hes about him, and continue on my way rej'icin'."

So saying, he stepped back to the body of the man he had slain, and, after carefully searching him for all that he carried valuable, excepting his weapons, he threw him over the cliff.

With a nerve that wholly belied his words to Badger, about his fear of the path, he stood looking down at the flying body, until it fell with a crash upon the rocks far below in a glen, the depth of which made it as dark there as twilight.

"Now he are gone, and I hev got a snug leetle pile mighty easy, I thinks."

"But I must git on ter ther nest, fer thet shot o' mine might hev set ther boys on ther watch."

So saying, he hid his ill-gotten gains about his person, tied a red silk scarf about his wound and started upon his way once more, mounting his horse as soon as a wide place in the path permitted of his doing so.

"Waal, I owes thet Injun two arrer-wounds," he muttered, as he rode along.

"He well-nigh broke my arm when he knocked my rifle out o' my hands and kept me from killin' thet Dandy Miner, King Kendall, and a leetle more jist now, and I'd hev toppled over ther cliff."

"Waal, I'll even up on ther Red Renard yit—Hello! thar is one o' ther boys now," he said, as he reached the defile of the mountain, into which the perilous shelf path led, and beheld a horseman seemingly awaiting his approach.

"It are Hungry Joe, and he hev come ter inquire about ther rifle-shot," he muttered, while aloud he called out:

"Hello, Joe, how is yer?"

The man he addressed was well mounted and well-armed, and these were the only things in

his favor, for otherwise he looked and dressed the villain he certainly was.

"Waal, Buck, are thet you?" he asked, in a drawing tone, as the Bravo rode up.

"It most certainly are."

"Yer allus tries to make a fuss in ther world, Buck, and must needs come up the Devil's Highway a-shootin' weepins, fer I lays out it were you."

"Yas, I shooted at a eagle that were flappin' about me most vicious as I rid along," was the Bravo's ready lie.

"Yer hain't skeered o' a eagle, Buck, I hopes; but I wishes yer'd hev ther sense not ter shoot so near ther nest, fer it skeers ther boys, and ther cap'n sent me down to scout out who it were, and supper jist about ready fer me."

"Thar yer go, Joe, an' yer is properly called, fer yer is allus hungry, was born hungry, an' yer'll die hungry."

"But how's things in ther nest?"

"All right, tho' ther cap'n hev been anxious about you, fer yer were due here some two weeks ago."

"Yas, I knows it, Hungry Joe, but I hev been on a leetle trip of my own."

"Dust in it, Buck?"

"In course, fer I doesn't handle nothin' thar hain't yaller metal in."

"You bet; but did yer see ther paymaster?"

"Does yer mean Badger?"

"Yas."

"No, I didn't see nothin' of him," placidly said the Bravo, and he rode on with Hungry Joe up the defile which led further into the mountain depths.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GOLD BUZZARDS.

IN the very midst of the mountains, far up above the lowland valleys, was a canyon, shut in by lofty hills, the tops fringed by tall pines, and the whole spot just such a retreat as one would wish to dwell in, if he were a man that was forced to live away from his fellow-men.

A fall tumbled over a high cliff at the upper end of the canyon, and the walls of rock were impassable to the foot of man or beast; but within were green fields of grass, a crystal brook, and upon its banks were built rude log huts, seven in number.

One of these seven, the larger one, stood apart from the others, and seemed rather more comfortable and inviting as an abiding-place.

The others ranged along the brook, and evidently contained but one room each.

Before each hut, or cabin, a fire was blazing, and about them clustered a group of men, varying from four to six in number.

They were a wild-looking lot, bronzed-faced, bearded, long-haired, and armed with pistols and a long knife each.

Upon the trees scattered here and there were hanging saddles and bridles, and off up the canyon, grazing upon the rich grass, were nearly a hundred horses, varying from the large draught animal to the small broncho.

Where the cabins stood the canyon was very narrow, they taking up the space, with the brook, so that they formed a barrier against the animals straying out of the natural inclosure.

Back under the cliff was the larger of the cabins, before referred to, and it had a fire built to one side of it, and over which a Chinese was preparing supper, which consisted of broiled birds, roast potatoes, raw onions, coffee and hoe-cakes, baked in the ashes.

It was certainly a tempting repast for a hungry man, and so seemed to think an individual who was seated in a rustic chair before the cabin, and watching the culinary preparations of the heathen Chinese.

The individual referred to was a man whose appearance seemed wholly foreign to his surroundings.

He was hardly the medium hight, his form was slender and graceful, and his face, if possessed by a woman, would have been called beautiful.

His hair was black and hung in clustering ringlets upon his shoulders, and his darkly-bronzed face was beardless, which caused him to appear scarcely more than eighteen years of age.

He was dressed in a suit of black velvet, and beneath his sack coat shone the gold buckle of a fancy belt, in which he carried a pair of silver-mounted revolvers and a superb bowie-knife, while his remarkably small feet were incased in stylish top-boots, armed with gold spurs.

A black slouch hat with broad brim, and encircled by a red silk cord, sat jauntily upon his handsome head, and was turned up upon the left side, and held there by a large pin, representing a gold buzzard, an insignia which each one of the men also wore, yet not of the fine workmanship and size of the one of their captain, for such was the young man just described.

The bivouac, or rather the "Mountain Nest," as the men called it, was the retreat of a band of outlaws who had become known and feared as the Gold Buzzards of Colorado, and their

young leader had won unenviable fame as Captain Kit.

"Come, Hong Kong, you heathen, do you intend to see me starve right before your eyes, for I have the appetite of Hungry Joe," said the young captain, in a half-impatient way, addressing his Chinese servant.

"Suppee ready light away quicke, nicee suppee for goodee 'Melican man," answered Hong Kong, with a grin, spreading a clean cloth upon a rude table, for although an outlaw and living in a mountain nest, the Chinese kept up a "washee washee, allee samee," as he expressed it, that his master might have clean linen for his table to wear.

"For a good American man, you say, you heathen, and you know me to be a bad one; but anyhow I'll take the supper," and rising from his chair, the young outlaw took a seat at the little table.

Into a large silver cup the Chinese poured his coffee, and a massive bowl of the same precious metal sat near filled with sugar, while the rest of the table service was equally as valuable and had evidently done duty in some elegant home ere it became the property of the chief of the Gold Buzzards.

As the young outlaw took his seat there rode into the camp two horsemen, whom the Chinese recognized, for he called out:

"Hungry Joe comee back, and Buckee the Bravee with him."

"By Jupiter! you are right, Hong Kong."

"Run and tell the Bravo to come up and take supper with me, and ask Hungry Joe who it was that fired that shot down toward the pass."

Hong Kong darted away, and soon returned with the two men, Hungry Joe simply saying, as he touched his hat:

"No danger, cap'n, fer it were Buck thet fired ther shot."

"All right, Joe; sit down, Buck, and Hong Kong will set a plate for you," announced the young captain.

Hungry Joe walked away hastily toward his own quarters, while Buck Bradley took a seat placed for him by the Chinese, and said:

"I are jist in time, cap'n, and I are thet hungry I could eat a piece o' Chinese steak."

"No eatee Hong Kong steakee," growled the Chinese, hastening to place food before the man who had hinted at cannibalism.

"Well, Buck, what have you to report?" asked Captain Kit.

"I hev been off on a leetle expedish all o' my own, cap'n, and as I writ you, I hev not been in Bonanza City fer some time."

"I received no letter from you, Buck; by whom did you send it?"

"By Jingo, who were in town ther day afore I started."

"Well, Jingo got into a gambling-scraps, and his checks were called in, and that accounts for it; but did you write in cipher?"

"Yas, cap'n."

"Then no harm is done, so go on and tell me what you have been about, for I got anxious about you, and told Badger to look you up, as he was going down with some booty to exchange for dust."

"I'll give ye ther news, cap'n, jist as it happened, and you kin judge as to what are best ter be did," and having finished his supper, the Bravo lighted a cigar handed to him by Captain Kit, and began the story he had arranged to tell his chief, for in reality Buck Bradley, the pretended miner, was nothing more than the spy of the Gold Buzzards.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BRAVO'S STORY.

"CAP'N, thar were a new man come inter Bonanza City," Buck Bradley said, in beginning his story.

"You speak of him as though it were not an every-day occurrence for a man to go to Bonanza City."

"He were not an every-day man, cap'n."

"Ah! something out of the usual run of men?"

"He were, fer a fact, fer he were handsome as a pictur' painted in red, strong as a bucking broncho, c'u'd shoot ahead o' anything I ever seen, and had diamonds to throw to ther birds."

"He were dressed ter upset a gal's head, sported a gold ticker and chain, and looked ther out and outer Dandy from Velvetville, but were chuck-full o' sand and were a tiger from Tiger-ville ef yer rubbed him ag'in' ther fur."

"Oh, he are a darling, and he jist painted ther town blood-red ther fu'st night they jumped him fer a slouch, and raised a howl in Bonanza City thet jist made ther dogs hang the'r tails in disgust."

"You seem to think well of this stranger, Buck."

"Not me, fer I hates him, and has it in my mind ter fili his heart with lead whenever I gits ther chance," was the savage response.

"You spoke so highly of him that I thought you were his friend," indifferently remarked Captain Kit.

"I spoke of him as he showed himself ter be, cap'n, and I hain't afeerd ter acknowledge a man when I sees one."

"But I'll tell ye more about him."

"I should certainly like to hear about him, Buck."

"Waal, cap'n, ther fu'st we seen o' him were when I were crowded one night by ther boys, who didn't like my holdin' trumps in every game, and thar were five of 'em about ter bounce me."

"It were at ther Free-and-Easy Saloon, yer know, and ther place were crowded."

"Suddenly a young gent gits up from a table over in the corner, and says he:

"Gentlemen, don't squeal like cowards because a man has won yer money, onless yer kin prove he hev cheated yer."

"Ef he hev, take him out and hang him; ef not, try yer luck ag'in' him another time."

"I hes watched ther game, and it seemed fair and square ter me, and I am a stranger in these parts, and I doesn't intend ter let no five men jump onter one."

"Waal, cap'n, them words set me top o' ther heap, and we all looked at ther handsome cuss."

"He were ther one I told yer about, and he did look so dandified I thought he hedn't ther grit ter back up his words."

"But he tarned ther five fellers from me onter himself, and they looked mischief, while Iron Sam said:

"Waal, stranger, as yer has turned up without bein' asked to perform, we'll drop on ther Bravo and waltz with you."

"Ther stranger smiled as sweetly as tho' he were flirtin' with a widdier at the funeral o' her partner, and he said, in his sweet way:

"Gentlemen, I'd a heap rather have a little knock-down cirks with fists than a dead-and-bury picnic with revolvers, for ther latter makes stiff, as you know; so lay aside your weapons and let us fight it out with fists, and then I'll treat ther crowd to wine, whether I git whipped or not."

"Cap'n, it were astonishin' ter see ther effect o' them words, fer it were something new in Bonanza City ter have a fight without weepins."

"But ther treating ter wine struck ther boys, while Iron Sam thought he c'u'd lick ther stranger without trouble."

"So they agreed, and ther weepins was laid aside, and Iron Sam went fer ther handsome young feller; but cap'n, right thar is whar Iron Sam found that a tack-hammer, properly handled, are as dangerous as a ax, fer thet leetle left hand o' ther stranger caught Sam's blow and tarned it aside, while his lively right plant-ed itself upon ther miner's nose in a way that sent him flyin' over inter ther crowd."

"Iron Sam were mad, and astonished, too; but he got up and went at him again, when he were laid out like dead."

"A bottle o' wine, please," said ther stranger to old Tom, ther bartender, and knocking ther neck off he poured ther contents over Sam, sayin', pleasant-like:

"Thet will revive him."

"And it did, too; and ther stranger asked Sam's pards ef they were ready fer their tarn; but they declined with thanks, and so he set up ther wine fer ther whole crowd, with cigars throw'd in."

"I tuk a fancy ter ther chap and axed him ter make my cabin his home, which he did, and when he heerd about ther Lost Gold Mine, he said he w'u'd go with a party to find it."

"Of course, I went along, as did Slouchy Sam, Bonanza Bill, and several more, and we got up a nice outfit and slipped off quiet one night."

"My idee were to go with 'em, and ef they found ther mine ter slip off and come arter you and ther boys, when we c'u'd wipe 'em out and git ther dust fer ourselves."

"A good idea, Buck, and I hope they found it."

"Cap'n, yer has heerd o' Red Renard, ther Sioux Miner?"

"Yes, and sometimes he is called the Indian Detective, as it is believed that he is in the Government's service."

"Yes, cap'n, thet are ther very Injun."

"Well, what about him?"

"They say he knows whar ther mine are thet no one kin find, and he certainly hes plenty o' gold with him when I sees him."

"I have heard that he was the friend of an old miner who found a gold mine two years ago, and was killed on the trail to Bonanza City one night, and that the Indian alone knows the secret of where to find the lead."

"Yas, cap'n, and he are determined no one else shall find it, for he come into our camp on the way and warned us away from the Death Mountains, whar I am confident ther Lost Mine are located."

"I thought it a prime idee ter torture ther secret out o' ther Injun, and let in on him fer thet purpose, when Lordy! thet young game-cock I told yer of jist tuk sides with ther Injun, backed ther whole lay-out out, and drove me away from ther camp."

"You don't mean it, Buck?"

"I does, cap'n."

"I thought you were not easily driven."

"Nor is I; but he did it, and I tuk water, fer

I hed reason ter, and left ther camp and went on alone to ther Death Mountains."

"That was plucky of you, when you know they say it is fatal for a man to go there, and that the ghosts of those who have lost their lives there make those hills their abiding-place."

"They does, too, cap'n, as I knows, fer I seen 'em."

"You saw what?"

"Ghosts."

"No!"

"I seen one ghost, and it were a enough, as you will understand when I tells yer," and the Bravo made known his experience with his spectral midnight visitor, and how he beat a retreat from the fatal mountains, met the young miner, was wounded by an arrow, and then came back to the Buzzard's Nest; but he took good care to tell just what things it suited him to make known, and had nothing to say of his meeting with Badger and the deadly scene at the Devil's Toll Gate, while he did state that he had again been wounded by the Red Renard, who was evidently upon his trail.

"Well, Buck, you have had a hard time of it, and you were foolish not to let me dress your wounds before."

"Here, Hong Kong, water and bandages here at once."

The Chinese brought the requisite necessities, and the outlaw captain dressed the wounds with the skill of an experienced surgeon, while he talked the while with the Bravo, asking him:

"And where is the mining-party now, Buck?"

"I seen four of 'em take ther back trail fer Bonanza City, while ther cap'n he remained behind."

"Ah! he intends to hunt for the Lost Gold Mine alone?"

"I guesses so, cap'n."

"Well, Buck, I want you to return to Bonanza City, hasten Badger back to the Nest, find out what you can regarding valuable trains and overland coaches for me, and send word by him, and then get from those miners who returned all they know about the movements of this mysterious stranger, and if he has remained alone in the Death Mountains."

"Yas, cap'n."

"If he has, I shall put spies upon his tracks, and if he finds the Lost Mine it is ours."

"Yas, cap'n, and I'd like ter be one o' ther spies, fer I hopes ter come up with thet red Injun and git his scalp."

"Well, you shall be one of the spies, while, if you see the Red Renard in Bonanza City, accuse him of being the murderer of the old man who found the mine."

"That are a good idee, cap'n, and I'll git him hanged, and only have ther cap'n, King Kendall, ter look arter then— What are the matter, cap'n?" asked Buck, anxiously, as the young chief turned white as a corpse.

"What name did you speak then, Buck Bradley?" almost gasped Captain Kit.

"King Kendall, ther young miner cap'n."

"Good God! that man in these wilds?"

"What does it, what can it mean?" and Captain Kit hastily walked into the cabin, leaving the Bravo amazed at the deep emotion he had shown at the mere mention of the name of the young miner.

"I guesses thar are some secret thar, and I'll use it ag'in' him ef need be, fer he tained as white as though he were struck dead, when I mentioned ther young feller's name," muttered the Bravo.

After a few moments Captain Kit came out of the cabin, and approaching the Bravo, said abruptly:

"Buck, describe the man who you said bore the name of King Kendall."

In his quaint, queer way Buck Bradley described the young miner, casting no slur upon his looks, on account of his hatred for him, and then Captain Kit remarked, thoughtfully:

"There can be no mistake, for there can be but one King Kendall; but in Heaven's name why has he come here?"

"I dunno, cap'n; but are he a friend o' yourn?"

"I did not expect you to know, sir," sharply returned Captain Kit, while he added:

"Yes; he was my friend once; but is not now."

"Buck!"

"Waal, cap'n?"

"If you see that man, kill him as you would a snake that crossed your path," fiercely said the young chief, and then he added:

"Kill him, and I'll give you an even ten thousand in gold."

"Count him as dead, cap'n, fer his days are numbered," the Bravo replied, and rising, he went to his own camp to seek the rest he so much needed, for even his giant frame felt the severe strain which had been put upon it the past few days.

It was now night, and back and forth before his cabin paced Captain Kit, his head bent, his hands clasped behind him, and his whole attitude that of a man who suffered deep mental anguish, while ever and anon the words came to his lips.

"Yes, large as this world is, it is too small for both King Kendall and myself to live in, and one of us must die."

"Yes; one of us must die, and I shall devote my every energy now to take his life."

"It must be; it shall be!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WOUNDED RED-SKIN.

WHEN King Kendall mounted the cliff, by means of his lariats, and discovered the body of the Indian lying upon the rocks, he felt a pang of deep sorrow, for he had taken a great fancy to the Red Renard.

He was certainly considerably taken aback, too, at the sight, for, if the Indian lay dead there, who then was it that had fired the timely arrow into the arm of the Bravo?

The arrow had borne the well-known mark of Red Renard, the Sioux miner, and none else could have taken interest enough in him to have fired upon the Bravo, Kendall thought; yet, there at his feet, seemingly dead, lay the very red-skin.

Bending over him, King Kendall started as he caught his eyes full, and a moan came from the set lips.

"Great God! he is not dead," he cried, and he hastily stripped away the hunting-shirt to examine the wound.

It was in his right side and had bled freely; but the Indian was certainly yet alive.

In glancing about him, to see what was best to be done, King Kendall's eyes fell upon a cave back under the overhanging mountain cliff.

Through there he certainly had come upon the point of rocks, for the young miner remembered that Bonanza Bill had said the Indian was mounted when Black Jack had fired upon him, and there was no other way for him to reach the spot where he lay.

Hastening back to the cave he saw the tracks of a horse as he went along, and this convinced him that there was some path leading to the top of the cliff.

The cave was a small one, the ceiling high enough to permit of a horse passing through, and, as it did not appear to be very dark, Kendall knew there must be an egress not far away.

Hastening along, he soon came into the daylight again, for the cave was but a tunnel-way through the lofty cliff and led out into a little glen where the verdure was of most luxuriant growth.

A large wigwam was there, built of bark, and through the glen ran a small rivulet.

A pony, saddled and bridled, was feeding near, and several other horses were staked out upon the hillside, and looked wistfully at the intruder, as though they had been lately neglected.

"This then is the home of the Red Renard, and yonder is the horse he rode when Black Jack shot him."

"This may be a luck find for me," muttered Kendall, as he hastily arranged a bed of the skins and blankets in the wigwam, and placed it in the entrance to the cave.

Then he hastened back to the wounded Indian and taking him up gently in his arms, bore him to the couch and placed him upon it.

Taking from his belt a small pocket-case he wore attached to it, he took out a probe and felt for a bullet.

He found it after a short search, though it made the Indian wince with pain, and in a few moments more the ball was extracted, the wound dressed, and a draught of cool water given to the sufferer.

Having thus cared for the Indian, Kendall set about searching for a way by which to leave the little canyon.

After a long hunt he found a narrow defile through the rocks, leading down into the valley, and returning he mounted the Indian's pony and set off down it.

A ride of half an hour brought him into the bed of a stream that dashed down the mountain-side, but convinced that he was on the right track, he gave rein to the horse and the intelligent animal boldly entered the current, which was very deep, and followed it for some distance, when he turned from it upon a flat rock that left no trace of his hoofs upon it.

"I am all right now," muttered Kendall, and he urged the pony into a gallop, and soon came out of the glen upon the banks of the river, not far from the spot where he had

parted with the miners, and so nearly lost his life at the hands of the Bravo.

Going into the canyon he soon reached the locality where he had left Comrade and the pack-horses, and found the animals patiently awaiting him.

Unfastening his lariat from the tree and drawing it from over the cliff, he mounted his horse, and followed by the pack animals he set off upon his return to the retreat of the red-skin in the mountains, for he had determined to devote himself to the care of the wounded Indian until he recovered or died.

It was nearly sunset when he reached the little retreat, and he was glad to find that his patient seemed to be better, and he held hopes of his recovery and set about making himself comfortable for the night.

He led the horses to the stream to water them, staked them out where there was plenty of grass, built a fire to cook his supper, and after pitching the canvas tent he took from one of the pack-saddles, over the Indian, he dressed his wound again and then sought shelter for himself in the wigwam.

It was broad daylight when he awoke, and he sprang to his feet and hastily went to the tent to see after his patient, ashamed of himself for having been such a sluggard and so neglectful of his charge as to sleep through the night undisturbed.

"Great God! he has gone!" broke from his lips, as he saw that the tent was empty.

Rapidly he went hither, thither, everywhere about the little glen, the cave and out upon the cliff; but the wounded Indian, whom he did not believe able to move, had most mysteriously and miraculously disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MINER AND THE GRIZZLY.

WHEN King Kendall realized that the wounded Indian was indeed gone, he was certainly taken aback.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have believed that the red-skin was shamming; but he knew that he had lain upon the cliff, where he had fallen, at the shot of Black Jack, until he had found him there.

There was the pool of blood beneath him, his still saddled and bridled pony in the glen, where he had run after his rider fell, and having dressed the wound, the young miner knew just how severe it was and that he had set it down with the chances against the man's living.

He had appeared better after the bullet had been extracted and the wound dressed; but then he had seemed in a comatose state, and had shown no sign of recognition of his condition.

King Kendall was a light sleeper, and yet the Indian had disappeared and failed to awaken him.

The thorough search of the glen and surroundings had revealed nothing, and he came to the conclusion that, with the sudden strength that comes at times to a dying man, he had darted away from his couch and gone off in the woods to die.

"I can but remain here and see if he returns," he muttered, and he began to prepare his breakfast.

Having finished his meal, the young miner decided that he would take a look through the canyon, where he had found gold, and also seen the spectral-looking grizzly and its ghastly rider.

Leaving the glen by way of the tunnel, and armed with his belt of weapons and lariats, he soon reached the top of the cliff, and making one end of the lasso-line fast about a convenient rock, he dropped the other end down into the canyon.

Down this he went with ease to a footing below, and then went up the canyon.

He soon came to the camping-place, which Digger Dan and his companions had fled from, and where he had passed the night.

He saw no signs there of any one having been about since his departure early the morning before, and deciding to have a look in the stream for gold pockets, he went in that direction.

His search was quickly rewarded, and his "finds" were numerous, so that the day nearly passed away before he was aware of the time.

He might not then have noted how the

hours were flying, had not the sunlight suddenly left the valley.

"Why, the sun is setting, and really have I had the gold-fever upon me, for I did not think I had been an hour at the work."

"Well, I have done a good day's business, that is certain, for every pile counts up a thousand dollars, I should judge, and I'll try and reach the same sum to-morrow."

"I am in luck, and shall remain in the Indian's camp for some while, at least until I get a snug little fortune from this stream, for I am sure there is plenty of gold here."

"I do not care to find the Lost Gold Mine with this brook a bonanza to me; but I should like to solve the mysteries I have seen since coming into this savage land."

"That one of the Haunted Bridge, as the boys called it; how it could be cut away and I right upon it."

"Then who was it that killed Slouchy Sam, and what that rascal Buck Bradley is hanging around this country alone for."

"The grizzly and his ghostly rider I wish to find an explanation for, as well as the fact that Red Renard was shot down by Black Jack one day, and the next saved my life by his arrow from the thicket, while, a few hours after, I found him dying on the cliff, where he had fallen from his horse, and when, as it were dying, he was able to leave camp."

"These mysteries I must solve above all things; but above all, I must discover what I came to these wilds to find out."

"Yes, I have been two years on the hunt now, and I will not give it up, no, never! until I am assured that it is of no use."

"I have been in luck, that is certain, for, from my coming to the West I have struck it rich, as the miners say, at every point, while poor fellows have worked for years without finding as much gold as I did in my first day's hunt."

"And see what a snug pile I have picked up to-day."

"Well, it is growing dark, and I must return to my camp in the glen."

Thus mused King Kendall, as he stood on the side of the little brook, his large silk handkerchief well weighted with the little particles of gold which he had found.

He was well up in the canyon, and the precipitous banks rose high upon either side of him, while at their base grew a number of majestic pines.

Up the mountain-sides were other growths of trees, and all together rendered the scene picturesque, but wild, desolate and lonely in the extreme.

Already the shadows of night were falling in the valley, and objects at a short distance were becoming indistinct.

As he glanced up the canyon, preparatory to setting out upon his return, brave as he was, King Kendall started at the object that met his gaze.

He started the more, for he had, during the afternoon, laid down his belt of arms while working, and in making a little dam, to run the water off a spot in the stream where he had felt sure he would find an accumulation of gold, he had not observed that the brook, thus spread out of its banks, covered his weapons, wetting the powder and rendering them useless.

As he had expected, he found the gold deposit, but it fretted him to think that he had been so careless about his arms, upon which life might depend at any moment.

Now he felt keenly his negligence, as his eyes rested upon the object that so startled him.

"Well! I am in for it now, and death certainly seems not far off," he murmured.

But he kept his stand, one revolver drawn, though he felt the uselessness of so doing.

Not far from him standing as still as though carved in marble, and just as snowy white, was a huge monarch of the mountain, a grizzly bear.

He had never seen as large a one before, and one that looked more savage, though, as I have said, he stood as still as though there was no life in him.

"I have my two derringers in my sleeves," muttered King Kendall, though he was well aware that he dared use them only at close range, and a grizzly bear hung on to life with the tenacity of a cat, as he knew but too well.

"It looks like the specter grizzly of last night," he continued, and added:

"But certainty is better than suspense, be it what it may, so I'll bring on the climax by beating a retreat."

He turned to go, and as he did so the grizzly moved forward.

He walked off at a slow, seemingly indifferent pace, and the grizzly followed, though at a gait that gained upon the young miner.

"I am a fleet runner, but yonder brute can distance me, I know," muttered Kendall.

Then he paused and glanced toward one of the trees that stood as near to him as was the bear.

"If I climb a tree that savage fellow has leisure to remain until I drop out, and it's nip and tuck whether I can reach one," he said.

Again he moved forward, and the grizzly hastened after him.

Once more he stopped, but the bear came on.

"Well, I'm in for it," he said grimly.

"I have four shots in my double barrel derringers, and I will use them only at arm's length."

He wheeled to face his fate boldly, dropping his handkerchief of gold at his feet, and thrusting his revolver back into his belt.

Then he loosed his long knife in its scabbard, and slipped his derringers, hidden in his sleeves, into his hand, while he said firmly:

"Now, Mister Grizzly, this is a fight to the death and I am ready."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GRIZZLY AND THE SPECTER.

It was certainly a most desperate situation for a man to be placed in, there, face to face with the huge grizzly, and with no help near.

But King Kendall met the ordeal bravely, and stood his ground without a tremor, his nerves like iron, his weapons ready.

Slowly toward him the huge monster of the mountains came.

He seemed to come with noiseless tread, and from his huge, half-open mouth there came no sound.

Nearer and nearer he drew, until about forty feet only separated the man and the brute.

Other men might have lost their nerve and fired then; but not so King Kendall.

He was at bay and he would await the attack, and no act of his should precipitate it.

Suddenly the grizzly halted, and then he arose upon his hind legs, standing up well and towering above the miner.

King Kendall knew well what was meant. It was the last act in the drama before the attack.

The man breathed hard, nerved himself the more, and bent forward to meet his brute foe.

But no sound came from the grizzly, and he stood up as still as the rocks about him.

An instant this horrible suspense, in death-like silence, lasted, and then King Kendall made a step forward.

The ferocious brute did not move.

Another step on the part of the man, and still the grizzly remained grim, silent and motionless.

"My God! I must end this," cried Kendall and he was about to rush upon the brute, when suddenly, out of the shadow of the trees glided a human form.

A human form, yes, and yet seemingly the ghost of one, for it was clad in snowy white, and glided up to the side of the huge grizzly, and placing one hand upon its shaggy shoulder, with the other pointed down the canyon.

The sight of this seeming specter of a dead person checked King Kendall, in his intent to run upon the bear and attack him.

He recognized the phantom and the brute now, which had so frightened his comrades the night before, and which he had seen himself rush howling and shrieking down the canyon.

Had the bear not been there, King Kendall would have rushed upon the specter and solved the mystery of just who or what it was.

But he dared not attack both, and stood looking at them with a feeling akin to horror.

"As they seem company for each other, I

guess I'll decamp," he muttered, and he turned to go.

Down the canyon he walked at a brisk pace, and behind him came the grizzly and the specter.

Rapidly he went along, but they kept pace with him.

Slowly he walked then, and they adapted their pace to his.

He halted, and they halted, too.

Again he moved forward, and the two followed him in silence.

At length the cliff came in sight and he determined to first pass his hanging lariat.

This he did; but the result surprised him.

The phantom suddenly left the side of the grizzly and walked straight toward the lariat, as though knowing it was there.

Then up the lariat he fairly seemed to glide, and disappeared from sight over the top of the cliff.

Standing still in dumb astonishment, the young miner beheld this strange sight, and, when the specter was no longer visible, he turned toward the grizzly realizing his mistake in not having gone at once to the line and ascended the cliff.

"By the gods of war! but the grizzly has gone!" he cried in his surprise.

"Well, this is truly the land of wonders," he muttered, as he walked rapidly toward the lariat.

Up the line he went, not knowing exactly what reception he would meet with when he reached the top; but he found that the specter had disappeared, so he continued on his way to the little glen.

It was now dark, and he passed through the gloomy cave with foreboding, yet nothing greeted him and he reached the glen in safety.

Hastily he threw some wood upon the fire, for quantities of brush and logs were piled up near, and soon had a bright blaze.

Then, to his surprise he found a deer hanging upon a tree near, all dressed for his use.

Who had brought this game to the retreat? he wondered.

The fire cast a bright light through the glen, and going to water the horses and stake them out on a fresh pasture for the night, he discovered that Comrade and his pack-animals alone remained.

The Indian's ponies had disappeared.

A search showed him also that some of the Indian's trappings had been taken, but nothing else, and not a thing of his had been touched.

"Well, the mystery increases," he muttered, as after looking after the comfort of the horses he returned to the fire and prepared his supper, the deer left there coming in very opportunely, as he had shot no game for his use.

Throwing a supply of wood on the fire, he went into the cave with his blankets to sleep, not caring to trust himself in the wigwam.

A long time he lay awake, wondering what had become of the specter and watching for its return.

But at last sleep overcame him and he became lost to consciousness in deep slumber.

He did not awake until after dawn, and then passed his hands over his face wearily.

As he did so his elbow struck something hard, and turning his eyes toward it, he sprang to his feet, a cry of terror, in spite of himself, breaking from his lips.

And no wonder, for lying by his side was a human skeleton!

The grinning face of the skull glared into his own, and never before in his life had King Kendall felt as unnerved as at that moment, he was fain to confess to himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BONANZA CITY.

BUCK BRADLEY the Bravo started at an early hour the morning after his interview with his chief upon his return to Bonanza City.

Captain Kit had further instructed him to gain what information he could that would be of use to him, such as the movements of gold trains, and Overland coaches containing valuables or passengers with money.

After doing this he was to return to the Nest, and guide three companions into the Death Mountains, to hunt down King Kendall, but under no circumstances to take

his life, for Captain Kit wanted him brought to him as a prisoner.

They were to find out if the young miner had found the Lost Gold Mine, and to search for it themselves if he had not.

Also, if they came across the Red Renard he too was to be captured, so that his secret might be tortured from him.

Thus, under orders, the Bravo set out, and without adventure he reached the hill overlooking Bonanza City, which lay in a valley, surrounded by overhanging mountains.

The place, from its name, a stranger would have judged was of some importance, and, in the eyes of its denizens it really was; but the first view was by no means prepossessing, for it consisted of a few hundred cabins, some small, some large, and a few rising to the dignity of barns in size, and in looks too, scattered along both sides of a small river.

The "city" was fully a couple of miles in length, and in width hardly a hundred yards.

The river was narrow and deep, the current was rapid, the banks steep, and about every eighth of a mile a rude bridge spanned it, capable of supporting a man and horse, while one of these primitive spans of the stream was large enough to bear an Overland coach and six, or a "prairie schooner."

This bridge was on the main trail, or street, running through Bonanza City, and which, coming out of the mountains to the east disappeared in a canyon to the west.

Along this trail, or road, the Overland coach, bearing the mail and passengers, was wont to travel once a week, and its arrival and departure were events in the life of Bonanza City, for, excepting a Government train or emigrant party, nothing else visited the secluded mining-camp.

The citizens of this strange place were an odd mixture, for they were men who had come there to seek their fortunes, either by digging it honestly out of the generous earth, or by keeping store, gambling, or living upon their wits and their fellows.

Perhaps a large percentage of Bonanzans had come there on account of its remoteness from law and order, and because they were fugitives from justice; at least, they looked it.

Most of the cabins were the homes of the miners, situated, as I have said, along the banks of the river, and also overshadowed by the overhanging cliffs of the valley, which was very narrow.

Few of the miners had to go far to work, so that after nightfall the camp was rather lively.

The miners thereabout panned out a steady income, if not a large one, and there was work for all who were not lazy.

The larger cabins spoken of were about a score in number, and were mostly grouped about two large bridges, and upon either side of the river.

The largest was the Bonanza Hall, a so-called hotel, where a rough bedstead and hay mattress were the furniture of the rooms, for guests were expected to furnish their own bedding, and could wash themselves under a shed on the river-bank, where were buckets and basins, or leave it alone at their will.

A few of the rooms, some four or five, were better furnished, but these were kept for guests who were distinguished, or what was just as good, could pay the exorbitant price asked for a night's lodging.

The table was by no means a poor one, but game, from buffalo to birds, was the stand-by, with bacon, corn and wheat bread and coffee.

The cook and waiters were Chinese, and good servants they made, too, while the host was a Methodist parson, who had come out into the Western wilds as a missionary, but finding that converts were few and far between, had gone to keeping a hotel.

He had also built a church near, and held services there almost daily, for he held forth only at funerals, and they were of daily occurrence, though seldom it was that a man had been known to die a natural death in Bonanza City.

There were not half a hundred women in the camp, although the male population amounted to two thousand.

Running opposition to Parson Pete, as the proprietor of the Bonanza Hall was called, was the "Free and Easy," another

tavern, the landlord of which was the "boss gambler of ther town," as the citizens put it.

His hotel was not so well kept, but his saloon and gambling hell were the most gorgeous resorts in the town, and the boarders at Bonanza Hall gambled at the resort of Doctor Dick, as the landlord was called, for he had once been a surgeon in the army, those said who knew him.

Between Doctor Dick and Parson Pete a real friendship existed, for the former had on a number of occasions furnished the corpse for the latter to bury, and his fee had always been a liberal one.

Parson Pete looked the itinerant dispenser of piety, for he was tall, thin, wore a black suit buttoned up to the throat and a high hat, with spectacles, which some said had plain glass in them, while Doctor Dick was as flashily attired as a Broadway swell, and was called handsome even by his enemies, and all knew him to possess the courage of his sentiments, as in fact did the parson, too.

There were other saloons in Bonanza City, but they were of little account, and with the mention of the Overland stables, half a dozen stores, a blacksmith-shop and a stone jail, where a prisoner was kept until the Vigilance Committee "sat on him," I have finished my description of this very interesting mining-camp, where some of the scenes of my story are to transpire, and whose denizens form some of my characters.

With the exception of the coming of the Overland stage, the killing of a man or two every week, and a hanging at the hands of the Vigilantes, Bonanza City had but few other means of excitement.

True, now and then a miner "struck it rich," and that caused lively talk for a while, and another won a large stake at the Free and Easy; but then there were two topics of deep interest the citizens never tired of.

These were the Gold Buzzards of Colorado, under their leader, Captain Kit, and the Lost Gold Mine of the Death Mountains.

Refer to either of these subjects amid a crowd of Bonanzans, and an earnest conversation followed.

The departure of King Kendall and his party for the Death Mountains was known, for the secret of their destination had leaked out, and there was but one person in the town who believed in their success, so numerous had been the failures in that direction.

That one was Doctor Dick, and he had said:

"I believe they'll reach the mountains in safety, and stay there, even if they do not find the mine, for that young fellow, King Kendall, is the man to lead them, and he'll have his way in spite of Buck Bradley, Digger Dan and the rest of the boys."

Thus the days went by in Bonanza City, and one evening four men suddenly and unexpectedly entered the saloon of the Free and Easy.

They were Digger Dan and his party, and a wild shout went up at sight of them.

Hardly had they been called upon to tell their story, when into the place strode the tall form of Buck Bradley, the Bravo, and he had his revolvers in his hand as though he had come for mischief.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RETURNED GOLD-HUNTERS.

THE sudden entrance of the Bravo, into the Free and Easy saloon caused a general surprise and deep interest, for there was mischief in Buck Bradley's eye, which his having his revolvers in hand did not belie.

The four men comprising Digger Dan's party had just taken a seat at a table, by invitation of Doctor Dick, who had ordered drinks, and Bonanza Bill was about to give their experience to a large and interested audience, when the Bravo entered.

It was evident that he had also just arrived in town, and had heard outside that the Digger Dan party were in Doctor Dick's, and he expected trouble, so determined to have it out.

Buck Bradley, as the reader knows, had been a "mortal terror" in Bonanza City, a kind of "graveyard provider" as some of the boys expressed it.

He had never backed down before but one man, and he was King Kendall.

As the latter was not there, the Bravo had determined to assert his rights, and at once.

If the Digger Dan party wished to turn the laugh on him, on account of Kendall proving his master, and driving him from the camp, he would make the laugh a dear one, he made up his mind.

But if they wished to keep that affair to themselves, and let him tell his story, then he was willing to have it so, and remain their friend.

But to hold the winning hand from the start he entered the Free and Easy with his weapons ready, and glancing over the saloon, he called out savagely:

"Who is it here thet are lyin' about me?"

"Quick! let him come out, or prove himself a liar, for I is back ag'in ter reside in Bonanza, and I has a contract with ther buryin'-ground on ther hillside ter furnish stiffs."

A silence fell upon all.

Not a man moved, but all eyed the bully.

Digger Dan and his three comrades had no desire to crow over the Bravo.

They had intended telling their story of their adventures, and simply putting it that Buck Bradley had found his master and been driven from their camp, since which time they had not seen him.

His coming there then was a great surprise to them, for the miners they had met, as they entered the town, and said he was not in the camps.

For a moment no one moved, or spoke in answer to the Bravo's challenge, and then he said:

"I have spoke, and woe be unter ther pilgrim thet hes used my name light."

"Now, here I are, so let him stand out and face the music."

At this Doctor Dick arose.

His face wore its usual calm; but a smile that was not a pleasant one to behold danced about his lips, for those who knew him well had seen him look thus on several occasions before, and those who had then brought the look to his face were lying up on the hillside in what was known as the Kingdom Come Cemetery.

"Bravo Bradley, I allow no man to enter my saloon upon the war-path."

"If gentlemen get into trouble here, and then draw and settle the matter, that is all right; but you shall not come in with your guns out and try to paint the place red, for I won't have it, and you'll either put up your irons and sit down like a man, or I'll have Parson Pete reading the burial-service over you to-morrow."

Doctor Dick spoke slowly and distinctly.

His hands were clasped behind him, seemingly a favorite way he had of standing, but the Bravo did not doubt but that they grasped a revolver.

The bully saw the Doctor in the midst of a group, while he stood off to himself.

If he fired in that direction, even if he killed the Doctor, a dozen weapons would be turned upon him he well knew, so he said, in response:

"Waal, Doc, I don't wish ter break ther laws o' ther Free and Easy, so in goes my irons until I hears what Digger Dan and t'others has ter say ag'in' me."

"Let's have some wine all round," and Buck walked over and sat down at the table with the others, while Doctor Dick said:

"You are not as big a fool, Buck, as I thought you were, and I am glad to see it."

"Now let us hear your story of the hunt for the Lost Gold Mine."

"I'll give it to yer as far as I knows," was the answer, and, after joining in a drink all round, and to the surprise of all, at his own expense, for the Bravo was not one to pay when he could avoid it, he continued:

"Waal, pards, as yer seems ter know whar we went, I might as well own up it were ter s'arch fer ther Lost Gold Mine."

"But here we is, an' ther mine were not only not found, but it are my idee never will be."

"Yer knows ther han'some game-cock as went with us?"

"Him as called himself King Kendall?"

"Waal, I said then as he were a man o' narve, and a stroke o' lightnin', an' I hasn't had reason ter change my mind, fer in a leetle onpleasantness we hed afore we reach-

ed ther Death Mountains, it come ter my mind that he were a better man than I were, and ther result were that we parted comp'ny I goin' my way alone.

"Hain't thet so, pards?" and he turned to Digger Dan and his comrades, who nodded assent, evidently amazed at the cool manner in which Bravo had disarmed them, by telling the story himself about his trouble with King Kendall.

"Waal, pards," continued the Bravo, "tho' I says as much fer thet young miner, it are not ter be considered thet I knuckles ter any one else, nor ter him ag'in on equal terms, and ef any pilgrim wishes ter try it on with me, he'll find me ther most 'commo-dat-in' customer in these parts.

"As ter what tuk place arter I left ther outfit, I doesn't know; but it do look as tho' thar had been trouble, as King Kendall and Slouchy Sam are not here with t'others.

"But as fer me I went my way alone, and I'll jist tell yer I doesn't ag'in care ter go to them Fatal Hills, fer I seen ghosts thar, I'll guarantee."

"Ghosts?" cried Digger Dan, Black Jack, Bonanza Bill and Denver Dick, in a loud chorus.

"Yas, ghosts," coolly responded the Bravo.

"Real live ghosts?" asked a miner, in husky tones.

"No, they was dead ghosts, but they was live enough fer me, and don't yer fergit it.

"Ther cause o' my trouble with King Kendall—and he are ther king o' this kentry, you kin gamble on it—were about thet Injun Red Renard, ther Sioux Miner.

"He come inter our camp and warned us ter keep out o' them mountains, and I thought as how we'd make him shout all he knowed about ther mine; but ther King tuk his part, and in ther split I got wu'sted, so went off on my own trailin', an' thus it were thet I seen ther ghosts.

"Yer see, pards, I hed camped fer ther night; but durn me, ef I wasn't woke up by a ghost, and found my weepins hed been tuk from me, and as I were beckoned ter foller I did so, and soon come upon my hoss, and thar, on ther horn o' my saddle, hung my belt o' arms.

"I mounted and got; but halted ag'in afore dawn ter rest, and dropped off ter sleep, when ag'in ther ghost come and p'int-ed thet I shed git out o' that kentry.

"I got, pards, and here I are; but as I comed back I were shooted at twice from ambush, and it were ther Injun thet did it."

"The Red Renard?" asked Doctor Dick.

"Yas, fer I hes his arrers here as keepsakes.

"Yer see, he shooted me in ther arm one time, and yer sees this leetle wound on ther side o' my head?"

"Waal, thar are whar he hit me ther second time, and he meant business."

"Why did you not kill him, Buck?" asked Doctor Dick.

"Because I c'u'dn't see him; but ther arrers tells me who it were."

"Yes, his arrows and his weapons are all marked with a red fox," the Doctor said.

"Now, pards, I hev done my story, and you kin shout, though I w'u'd say thet I believes thet ther Red Renard are the murderer o' thet old Hermit Miner, who owned ther Lost Gold Mine, and thet he is enjoyin' ther fruits o' his crime, as Parson Pete w'u'd say."

"Ef thet are so, ther Injun ought ter be strung up," said one.

"Yas, and I'll charge him with the murder ef he ever puts foot in Bonanza City ag'in, fer it hain't right thet a Sioux Injun sh'u'd be a gold miner, are it, pards?"

A general assent was given to this, and then Digger Dan told his story, passing over lightly the scene between the Bravo and King Kendall, as he and his comrades had not forgotten that the young miner boldly held them at bay, too.

"Waal, pards, here's ter another drink, and durn ther expense, fer I pays fer it, and my toast are ther hope thet Red Renard may hang fer murderin' thet poor old Hermit Miner."

As the Bravo paid for the drinks, many of his hearers voiced his sentiments, and one cried aloud:

"Yas, string ther Injun up on sight, are my sentiments."

As he spoke, into the saloon stalked none other than Red Renard himself!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CHARGE OF MURDER.

HAD a lightning-stroke suddenly descended upon the Free and Easy saloon, it could not have startled its patrons more than did the Indian, Red Renard, upon entering the place.

He was wont to visit Bonanza City now and then, seemingly only to buy stores and ammunition, and he always had plenty of gold to pay for his purchases.

He had always been peaceful, except when set upon, and then those who attacked him had been made to feel not only the weight of his arm, but had also become convinced of his deadly aim and courage.

Those who had waylaid him for the purpose of robbery, had more than met their match, and, as the Indian had done many little kindnesses to poor miners, helping them by liberally giving them gold, he had become a favorite with many, and been tolerated by others who dared not openly harm him.

The bold charge of the Bravo, however, seemed to set the tide against him, for, if guilty of killing a white man, and then living upon his gold, he certainly should die.

If dead, many believed it would be a safe thing to look up his mine, which it was by no means a safe thing to do with the Sioux miner living and ready to protect his property.

He had been offered large sums for his mine and refused them, as he did also to allow any one to have a share in it with him, while the best trailers had failed to track him to the golden spot of their hopes.

The Red Renard had several times before visited the Free and Easy gambling saloon, and looked in at the players; but he had never played cards or taken a drink, and those who now saw him were somewhat surprised to hear him order a bottle of wine.

"If he gits drunk, pard, we'll make him preach of whar his mine are, so I'll say nothing jist yet o' the charge o' murder ag'in' him," whispered the Bravo, as Red Renard bowed in a dignified way to Doctor Dick and several others present, and took a seat alone at the table, while the bartender placed the wine before him.

"Well, Dan, what do you think of the young miner, who you say remained in the Death Mountains?" asked Doctor Dick, willing to turn the attention of all from the Indian, whom he had taken a great fancy to.

"I thinks he are chain lightnin', Doc, and hes got more narve then are safe fer one man ter carry round with him."

"So says I, Doctor Dick," put in Bonanza Bill with enthusiasm.

"My sentiments till death," remarked Denver Dick, while Black Jack added:

"He are clean white, and ther man as picks him up fer a dandy will find he are a boss."

"I have an idea he is the best man over in these mines, and my money says so," Doctor Dick said quietly.

"Any man as stays in them mountains among ghosts, are not ter be skeered by humans," Digger Dan added, and just then in walked a man who was received with a shout of welcome.

It was Parson Pete.

"Parson, I am proud to see you.

"Sit down and join us in a drink, and maybe before you go, some of the boys will make more work for you to-morrow," said Doctor Dick, rising and giving the newcomer a seat.

"A leetle, Brother Dick, will I take for my stomach's sake, for that the Scriptur' allows it is very meet and right so to do.

"But I have a notice I wish to paste up in your saloon, and one of many I received by the Overland to-night.

"See, it is in reference to the old Hermit Miner who was killed some years ago so mysteriously, and—"

"Read it out, parson," cried a number of voices.

"Well, bretheren in sin, I will do as you wish," and in a loud, sing-song voice Parson Pete read:

"NOTICE TO MINERS!"

"It having come to the knowledge of those interested in one known as the Hermit Miner, and who was said to have found a most valuable gold mine

in the vicinity of Bonanza City, that he was murdered on the mountain trail one night about two years ago, a reward of

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS

is offered for the apprehension of his murderer, or murderers, and

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS

will also be paid for the discovery of his claim, now referred to as the Lost Mine.

"Address,

"SHARPE & CHEATHAM,

"Attorneys-at-Law,

St. Louis, Mo."

"Now, bretheren, I—"

"Hold on, Parson Pete, fer I hev a word ter say right here," and Buck Bradley, the Bravo, was upon his feet.

Then wheeling quickly he continued:

"I claims ther five thousand reward offer-ed fer ther murderer, fer I knows him.

"Thar he are, and he are my prisoner, fer I charges him with ther murder.

"Injun, ef ye winks even, yer'll be food fer coyotes," and Buck Bradley held his revolver leveled full at the heart of the Red Renard.

The Sioux Miner did not move a muscle at this charge against him.

He was dressed in his usual style, half-miner, half-Indian, but had the appearance of one who had ridden far and hard, for his cavalry boots were spattered, and he did not look as neat as usually was the case on his visits to Bonanza City.

His bow and arrows he did not have on; but his belt of arms was about his waist, though he made no effort to draw a revolver.

Looking the Bravo squarely in the face, while a breathless silence reigned in the room, he said in his dignified way:

"Bad pale-face; tell heap lie."

"You lie yourself, Injun, and you know it, for you did murder the old Hermit Miner, and you know where his gold mine is!" yelled the Bravo.

"No, Renard no kill Hermit Miner; but knows where gold mine is," was the calm reply.

A burst of applause came at this, for it had only been surmised before that the Indian knew where lay the Lost Gold Mine.

"Does yer hear, pards?"

"We hears," shouted a score of voices.

"He confesses he knows whar ther Lost Gold Mine is!" yelled the Bravo.

"Yas, he owns up," was the chorus of replies.

"Then he are guilty o' murder, and we'll make him tell, or we'll string him up."

"Yas, make him tell and string him up, too," came the cry.

"I'll do it. Injun, you is my game," and the Bravo stepped forward to place his hand upon the still unresisting red-skin, who had not risen from his seat.

But suddenly the Bravo started back, as a form appeared like magic confronting him, and a stern voice cried:

"Hands off that red-skin, Buck Bradley!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

BUCK BRADLEY, the Bravo, seemed to have stepped into his old place in Bonanza City, through his little game of bluff, when he entered the Free and Easy saloon, "loaded for geese," as one of the miners expressed it.

He had turned the tide that was setting against him, gotten on friendly terms again with Digger Dan and his party, made Red Renard out a murderer, and was in a fair way to get him hanged, for the crowd was with him, and no one seemed to speak for the Indian.

The Bravo would much rather preferred to have let the red-skin go free, and catch him in the mountains; but he had an idea that torture would not wring the secret he held from him, and so determined to get him hanged, secure the reward of five thousand, and then trust to King Kendall to find the Lost Gold Mine and he and his pards, sent with him by Captain Kit to take it from him.

The Bravo was a fiendish plotter, and he had even looked so far ahead, on his ride to Bonanza City from the Buzzards' Nest as to plan the death of those who went with him on the hunt for King Kendall, after the mine was found and the young miner safe in his power.

But a check had suddenly come upon him, just as he had the Indian where he wanted him.

The one who entered had him not only covered, but the revolver of his enemy pressed hard against his heart.

"Furies o' Perdition! it are *you*!"

He almost groaned the words as he saw who it was that had so opportunely appeared to save Red Renard.

At the same moment a dozen voices uttered the name of the one who had bearded the Bravo.

"King Kendall!"

"Yes, I am on your trail again, Buck Bradley, and just in time to prevent you from doing harm."

"Drop that weapon, or I pull trigger!" was the calm reply of the young miner.

The Bravo knew his man and let the weapon fall to the ground, for the Free-and-Easy did not boast any flooring.

"Now, sir, face to that door, and—"

"I say, pard, I hain't a-goin' ter be bullied by your or nobody else," growled Buck, the Bravo.

"Did you hear, sir?"

"I heerd, yes, and you has ther drop on me, as yer had once before, when yer druv me from camp; but ther boys hain't goin' ter stand and see you run this lay-out, jist ter git a Injun free from hangin', and I knows I shouts sense."

"Is yer, boys?"

The Bravo stood as still as though he were in position to have a photograph taken, but he talked the while, and from fear of him, hope of favor in his eyes, gain or deviltry, with various other reasons, there were a number of the crowd that took sides with him, for voices shouted:

"We stands by you, Buck!"

"Hang ther dandy, too!"

"Tie ther fresh pilgrim and ther Injun tergether, and pitch 'em in ther river!"

The crowd surged about viciously, the *click, click*, of cocking revolvers was heard, and then came a lull.

"Gentlemen, to you I am ready to answer when I have had my way with this bully, so do not press me now, I beg of you."

The words of King Kendall were mildly uttered, but there was that in them that had effect, for the crowd did not press him, while Doctor Dick remarked:

"Pards, give the gentleman fair play, for Buck came in here looking for a row and he has waked up the wrong passenger."

"They are man to man, so let them settle it."

"I say the same, Brother Dick."

"That huge sinner was persecuting the heathen red-skin and a Goliath bath been raised up to smite the persecutor, yea, verily," and Parson Pete stepped to the side of Doctor Dick, while Digger Dan and his immediate comrades also ranged themselves near.

"Pards, don't push ther young game-cock, fer don't yer see Parson Pete, ther Doc, and Digger Dan and his lay-out intends ter see him through," said one of the Bravo's backers in a loud whisper.

This side-play had not taken an instant of time, and now King Kendall said:

"As you seem unwilling to go of your own free will, I'll make you."

With the last words he seized the Bravo, just how no one seemed to know, and in an instant there was a crash as the bully was hurled through a closed shutter and a loud splash as he fell into the river, for that end of the saloon was on the edge of the bank of the stream.

"Now, gentlemen, I am ready to settle with those who dispute my right to punish a bully."

"Next!" called out the Doctor, in a gay tone.

"Yea, verily, my Christian brother. You have a hand of iron and a heart of steel."

"You have baptized the Bravo and cooled his wrath," said Parson Pete, admiringly.

"Gentlemen, join me, please, in whatever you are pleased to order."

"Come, chief—ah! where is the Indian?" and King Kendall turned with surprise, as he saw that he had disappeared.

No one had noticed the departure of the red-skin; but he had disappeared, that was certain.

"I'd rather drink than fight, any time!"

Come, pards, ther gent means it for us ter licker up," cried one of the men who had been most anxious to back up the Bravo.

The miners had certainly had all the fight taken out of them by the act of King Kendall, and the fact that the Parson, Doctor and Digger Dan were on his side, so they made the best of it and drank to the health of the young stranger.

Paying the score liberally, King Kendall tossed a bag of gold to Parson Pete with the remark:

"Divide that among any poor fellows of your flock, parson, who may be in need."

"Gentlemen, good-evening."

With this King Kendall raised his sombrero, and left the saloon.

An instant after King Kendall's departure from the saloon, a shot was heard without, followed by a heavy fall.

Out rushed a number of the miners, Parson Pete leading, for all felt that a tragedy had been enacted.

There stood King Kendall, and at his feet lay the form of the Bravo.

"Gentlemen, this man was in hiding to kill me; but I saw him just as he fired, and some one sprung up behind him and dealt him a blow that felled him to the earth."

"I do not think he is dead; but if so, bury him at my expense, please, Parson Pete."

And King Kendall strode away in the darkness, while the Bravo, unconscious and bleeding, was taken into the saloon.

"He is not dead, only stunned; but that blow in the back of his head was well intended, and the tomahawk of the Red Renard made it," said Doctor Dick, as he examined the wound.

"Yea, verily, but the heathen stood not long under obligations to his Christian brother," responded Parson Pete, and he aided in carrying the Bravo to a room in the inn, where, under the care of Doctor Dick, he soon rallied.

When the morning dawned, however, Buck Bradley had disappeared, and search for the Sioux Miner and King Kendall revealed the fact that they, too, were gone, a circumstance that caused the wise ones to say:

"This hain't ther end o' this leetle row yet, fer more are coming."

What had brought the young miner to Bonanza City no one seemed to know.

He had been seen only at the Free and Easy Saloon, and his coming was as great a mystery as was that of the Indian, who had not gone to any of the stores to purchase supplies, as was discovered by inquiry, and, coming to town after dark, had left it before dawn.

That Buck Bradley should also have put in an appearance there at the same time was also a surprise, and wise gossips put their heads together to solve the riddle.

Why the Bravo had, when believed to be seriously hurt, gotten up in the night and slipped away, was also a matter of wondering comment.

There were those who felt certain that there was a partnership existing between the Red Renard and the young miner.

The latter had taken his part when on the trail to the Death Mountains, and had appeared most opportunely to "deliver him from the hands o' ther Phillistines," as Parson Pete expressed it, while Red Renard had saved the life of Kendall by felling the Bravo with a wound that was evidently meant to be fatal.

But for the blow, given about as the Bravo pulled trigger, the young miner would have been killed, for the bullet had passed through the brim of his sombrero.

Thus was there food for gossip among the miners of Bonanza City, and the subject was discussed over and over again by knots of men in the street and in saloons, and the conclusion was arrived at that there was a good basis for the Vigilantes to work on, for it was argued that the Red Renard had murdered the old Hermit Miner, that was put down as a fact, while King Kendall was his ally and needed looking after, and Buck Bradley, the Bravo, having attempted an assassination, should be put out of the camp or hanged.

Upon the heels of these topics of excitement, the Overland stage rolled in one day and brought a number of printed slips,

which were posted up conspicuously and read as follows:

"TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD!"

"The above reward will be paid for the capture of the noted band of road-agents known as

"THE GOLD BUZZARDS OF COLORADO;"

OR,

\$5,000 REWARD

will be paid for the body of

CAPTAIN KIT, CHIEF OF THE BAND,

DEAD OR ALIVE!

AND

\$5,000 REWARD

for each of his men, dead or alive!

"THOMP BURTON,

"U. S. Marshal,

"Denver, Colorado."

"Pards, thet are better than gold-diggin', so let us go inter ther man-huntin' biz," said Digger Dan, upon reading this notice, and those he addressed, his three comrades, decided to join him in the enterprise and say nothing to any one about it.

"Not until we hes tuk in ther Gold Buzzard outfit," as Bonanza Bill remarked, while Denver Dick added:

"Yas, then it will be time enough ter preach, when we has 'arned ther boodle."

Two nights after the four men disappeared mysteriously from Bonanza City, and whither they had gone no one knew.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AGAIN IN THE BUZZARDS' NEST.

"CAP'N, I hev met ther inemy."

The remark was addressed to Captain Kit, the young chief of the Gold Buzzards, the second day following the scene in the Free and Easy Saloon of Doctor Dick.

"You look it, Buck."

"I feels it, cap'n."

"You look pale."

"I feels pale, I does."

"You got his scalp, I suppose?"

"Nary scalp, Cap; but yer see he nearly got mine," and the Bravo turned and showed the wound which Doctor Dick had so neatly dressed.

"That blow was from behind, Buck."

"Yas, cap'n," and the Bravo went on to tell the circumstances as they had occurred that night at the Free and Easy, adding:

"I were so mad, cap'n, arter I got out o' ther river, whar thet pile-driver slung me, thet I detarmined ter kill him; and I'd have done it, ef ther Injun hadn't been layin' for me and hit me jist as my finger touched ther trigger."

"I didn't know what hit me, but ther Doc says it were ther Injun, so I owes him another."

"I concluded as how it war not healthy fer me in Bonanza, so I comed away, and here I are."

"You did right; but you left King Kendall there?"

"Yes, Cap'n Kit."

"How long will he remain?"

"I dunno."

"And the red-skin?"

"He are in Bonanza too, I guesses."

"What about Badger?"

"Cap'n, hain't he come yet?"

"No."

"Then he hev lit out with ther boodle, fer he left Bonanza, they told me, some days ago."

"By Heaven! that is Badger, then, that lies down in the chasm, for the men say they can see a man and a couple of horses there."

"It may be, fer thet Devil's Toll Gate are a dangersome place, as I knows; but he must hev ther dust with him if he went over."

"Yes, and I will have a man lowered into the chasm to reach him."

"Any other news, Buck?"

"I found this paper stuck on a tree, cap'n," and the Bravo handed Captain Kit the printed reward offered by Marshal Thomp Burton for himself and band.

"He is liberal," sneered the young chief, and he added:

"Anything about the gold trains, Buck?"

"None leave for some weeks, cap'n."

"And on the Overland?"

"A stage goes through Friday, thet carries dust, I heerd."

"I'll halt it; but how long before you are ready for work?"

"To-morrow, I guesses."

"Good! pick four of the best men and strike out for the trail of King Kendall and that Indian."

"Remember, I wish both of them taken alive, if possible."

"You mean fer me to go into Bonanza after them?"

"No, send one of the men who is not known there to find out where they are."

"If they are not there then they have gone to the Gold Mine in the Death Mountains, for I believe they are pards, and if so, from one or the other we must get the secret of the lost gold find, for once we have that, we will not need to remain road-agents, Buck."

"I believes yer, cap'n. I shall do ther best I knows how, and don't you fergit it."

"Remember, I shall stake you well if you will bring me King Kendall alive."

"I shall nuss him same as if he were a baby, cap'n," was the answer, and the Bravo went to his cabin to get the rest he so much needed, for he was indeed a sufferer, while Captain Kit ordered a search to be made in the chasm for the body of Badger, and made preparations for starting out to intercept the Overland stage that Buck said would carry gold-dust.

The search of the chasm was made by lowering a man into it, by means of lariats tied together, and the result of his discovery was the finding of the body of Badger, but without a dollar upon him.

There were two horses there also, one of which was recognized as the animal which had belonged to Badger, and the other was stripped of his saddle and bridle, and it was believed that he must have been a stray, following the outlaw paymaster, and tumbled over with him.

There was a mystery about Badger's death that Captain Kit could not fathom; but he hit pretty near the truth when he muttered to himself, on hearing the result of the search:

"The man who killed Badger is in this band, for all knew that he was to return with the gold."

Early upon the next morning Captain Kit, accompanied by ten of his men, rode out of the Buzzards' Nest, on their way to halt the Overland coach and demand toll, as was their wont.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OVERLAND STAGE.

THE lumbering vehicle that was known as the Overland Mail Coach, was rather a hard-looking affair, battle-scarred and dingy; but it was the pride of Bonanza City, and the driver, Rattler, or as he was more often called, "The Rattler of the Ribbons," was an important personage along his line of travel.

The run of Rattler was about fifty miles to and from Blue Bell Mines to the east of Bonanza City, and Fairy City to the west.

It was through a hard country, on horses, coach, driver and passengers, and more particularly upon the latter, as the Gold Buzzards were wont to often relieve them of their surplus valuables while *en route*.

The Gold Buzzards defied pursuit and destruction, for it would have taken an army to invade their retreats, which were generally supposed to be in the Death Mountains, a place to be avoided as the home of spooks, so thought the miners.

Rattler was a dashing driver, a brave fellow, and a handsome young man whose pocket-book was anybody's friend, as many had had cause to know.

If there was a chance of success on his run, when halted by the Gold Buzzards, he got success out of the chance, and had not only dropped the man who ordered his "hands up," but had been wounded several times.

If the tide was against him he was sensible enough to tell the passengers it was "no go," the odds were against them, and to hand over their dust and save their lives.

Rattler's coach rolled into Bonanza the day after the departure of the Bravo, and as he sprung from the box he was met by a man who said:

"The Doctor wishes you to stop at the Free-and-Easy, Rattler, as he has a passenger and some tin for you to carry."

"All right, I'll be there, tell him."

"Now, pards, a drink all round," and saying the last in a loud tone Rattler led the way into the bar of Parson Pete's Bonanza Hall, followed by the crowd of dead-beats who always hung around to await his coming, knowing well the invitation that would follow.

As he left the bar and sprung upon the wheel to climb to the box, the horses started, and in spite of a grand effort to save himself, he fell heavily.

Instantly he staggered to his feet, but turned deathly pale and sunk down again, while he said quietly:

"No use, boys, the leg is broke."

"Some one else will have to run the old ark through."

He was carried to Doctor Dick's at once, while a hanger-on drove the coach.

"Rattler, you are laid up for two or three months, anyhow, so let some one else drive your coach, and it must be a good man, for I have passengers to go, and my last quarter's earnings to send to bank," said Doctor Dick.

"All right, Doc, select your own man, and as I have to be caged, there is no better place than here, and no better company than yourself," was the reply.

"Selecting a driver, Rattler, in your place is no easy matter; but I'll see who can go, as soon as I have set your leg."

"Never mind my leg now, Doc; but get the coach off first, for it should pull through the Shadow Valley before dark, as there are bad places there, and the Gold Buzzards may be flying low, for we've been let alone for some time, now."

The Doctor left the room and soon returned with two men.

They were not persons to be selected as models of virtue, to judge from their faces; but they were known to be good drivers, and that was the main requisite just then.

"Here's Old Hickory, Rattler, who will drive, and if he won't do, I have brought Slippery Jim for your inspection."

"Old Hickory will do, Doc, for I don't take any stock in Slippery Jim, and, for that matter, precious little in you, Hickory," was the frank rejoinder of the stage-driver, and then he added:

"Get on the box and put 'em through."

"The team is a good one, and if you have to make a run for it from the Buzzards, they are lightning."

"All right, Rattler, I'll not disgrace yer box, or hurt ther old huss," was the reply of Old Hickory, and he went out to take a look at the team, and get ready for his trip.

In the mean time, Slippery Jim left the room, and going out to the rear of the tavern mounted the horse of a miner he found hitched there, and pushed off down the Overland trail, and looking back as he reached the canyon that shut Bonanza City out from view, he saw Hickory just mounting the box.

"I knows what ther Doc sends on thet coach, and bein' as thar is but one passenger, an' she's a gal, I'll jist knock Old Hickory over, git ther dust, and leave these diggin's, whar I hes hed nothin' but ill fortin."

"It are a bonanza day fer me, I sw'ar," he said, as he pushed rapidly along.

After a ride of a dozen miles, Slippery Jim came to what was known as the Shadow Valley, for it was as dark as twilight there at noonday.

The road was pretty good then for miles, excepting several dangerous curves that followed the banks of the stream that ran through the valley, and a better place for road-agents to halt a coach could not be found.

There was no place the coach could turn about, or turn cut, and huge boulders and canyons were all along the way.

Going into the mouth of one of the small canyons, Slippery Jim hid his horse securely and then selected a break in the huge boulder in which to lie in wait.

From his position he could halt the coach without being seen, shoot Old Hickory from the box, and then rob the vehicle and the lady passenger.

It was a well-laid plan, and Slippery Jim lay complacently contemplating his little scheme, while watching for the coming of the coach.

"I'll jist rope in a bonanza— Hark! thar

are ther rumble o' ther wheels," and the highwayman settled himself to be ready for his devilish work.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DOUBLE TRAGEDY IN SHADOW VALLEY.

WHEN Old Hickory, primed with "four fingers straight," came out of the bar of the Free and Easy, to mount the box, Doctor Dick said:

"Now, old man, remember you carry a very valuable load, and a lady passenger."

"Yas, Doc."

"The lady wishes to go to Fairy City, to look up her brother, she says, though I guess it's a runaway lover, whom she believes is mining in the mountains, and you do all you can for her at the other end of the line."

"I'll do it, Doc."

"She came here on Rattler's last trip, and has found no trace of him about Bonanza."

"All right, Doctor Dick, I'll take care o' her, so trot her out and put her in ther old huss, fer I are ready."

"The box of tin is under the back seat, Hickory."

"I hopes it will stay thar, Doc," was the reply.

A moment after, the Doctor came out of the side door of his tavern, escorting a lady, who was dressed in deep mourning.

Her face was veiled heavily, so that it could not be seen; but her form was slender and graceful and looked youthful.

She carried a small sachel in her hand, and it being ungloved, was seen to be small, shapely, and as bronzed as an Indian's.

"I thank you, sir, for your kindness to me, and if you hear aught of my brother, Kent Kittredge is his name, will you kindly write to this address?" and she placed in Doctor Dick's hand a card.

The Doctor helped her into the coach, raised his hat, and as the vehicle rolled away, glanced at the card, and read aloud:

"SHARPE & CHEATHAM,

"Attorneys at law,

"St. Louis, Mo."

"Whew! that are the names signed to the reward offered for the murderer of the old Hermit Miner, and for the finding of the Lost Mine."

"There is a mystery about that young girl's coming here, that I would not be surprised would be cleared up soon."

"Well, it is none of my business, so I'll wait developments."

"Now to set poor Rattler's leg," and the Doctor went to the room of his patient, while the coach rolled on its way, Old Hickory handling the ribbons in a style that showed he was not new to the business.

As the coach reached the canyon it overtook a horseman, who had just come into the Overland from a trail leading down from the mountains.

His horse was covered with foam and seemed used up, and the rider hailed:

"Ho, old gentleman, I'll ride with you, for my horse is done up."

Hickory glanced at the speaker.

He had seen him before, and said, as he drew rein:

"You be the young blood who they calls King Kendall, hain't you?"

"Yes."

"I seen yer in Bonanza onc't, and hev heerd o' yer after; but these be dangerous times ter pick a man up on ther Overland."

"You certainly are not afraid I will rob you?" was the question in a pleasant way.

"No, but I hez to be keerful, pard, and ef yer'll ride inside the huss, you kin do so; but not on ther box."

"All right; I'll toss my saddle and bridle in the boot and jump inside."

"Is yer goin' ter tarn yer horse loose?"

"Yes, for he is dead beat."

"I'll look him up on my return."

"You can have him and welcome."

"Here is your fare, and keep the change for drinks," and he handed up a bank-note with a \$50 on it.

"You is ginerous, pard, so jump in, please."

King Kendall threw open the door and sprung in.

Then he started, doffed his hat and said:

"Pardon, lady, but I thought the old ark was empty."

The veiled lady uttered a cry, sunk back on the seat and seemed to reel, as though about to faint; but recovering herself quickly, as he started toward her, to offer assistance, she bowed her head, drew her veil more securely over her face, and settled herself as far down in the corner of the back seat as possible, and without uttering a word in reply.

King Kendall seemed surprised at her strange conduct, but as though not to annoy her, he sat upon the front seat, and became interested in glancing out at the scenery, as the coach sped along.

Old Hickory was a rapid, but skillful driver, and sent the six horses along at a lively pace, so that it was not very long before he came to the long descent into the Shadow Valley.

The heavy brake was put on, and the coach rolled down the slope at a trot.

Then the Shadow Valley was reached, and a moment after came the stern cry:

"Hands up, Old Hickory, fer I are on yer trail!"

"Slippery Jim, yer durned traitor, I'll see yer dead fu'st."

"Git up, ponies, and—"

Old Hickory never finished his sentence, for there rung out a sharp report and a bullet from the revolver of Slippery Jim caused him to fall back upon the top of the coach.

With a low cry of pain the old driver dropped his reins, while an exultant cry broke from Slippery Jim's lips as he sprung from his covert and brought the horses to a halt.

But it was the last act of his life, for a second pistol-shot rung out, and the traitor highwayman sunk in his tracks, still grasping the reins of the leaders.

The shot was fired by King Kendall, who, at the same moment, attempted to spring from the coach, when he was seized firmly by the veiled woman, who cried hoarsely:

"For God's sake do not get out, for see there!"

As she spoke a horseman dashed into view, a short distance in advance of a number of others, who suddenly opened a hot fire upon him, which caused his horse to stagger and fall heavily to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A STARTLING DISAPPEARANCE.

It will be remembered that King Kendall awoke, after his second night in the retreat of the Indian, to find by his side a skeleton form.

He had sought a resting-place in the shadow of the cave, so that, if attacked from the glen, he had a means of escape by the cliff, and if foes came from the latter direction, he could retreat through the glen.

He was very much fatigued in mind and body, and had slept soundly.

Nothing had disturbed his rest, or his dreams, and to find the skeleton by his side when he awoke, was one of those strange mysteries he could not account for, and with which that country seemed filled.

It lay upon the blanket by his side, the bony hands clasped peacefully upon its skeleton breast, as though he had walked in and quietly laid down there to rest.

"Well, I am awake, and there is no denying the evidence of my sight."

"That skeleton almost makes me believe in superstition, after all, and I certainly have gone through enough to shake my contempt for the supernatural."

"But I'll have it out, though I would like to have a companion with whom to divide watches, so that we could together solve these mysteries."

"Let me see: I'll go to Bonanza City and see if I cannot find a man of nerve, willing to return with me."

"This camp is the very place for my horses, and I'll risk them here, as soon as I have built a barrier to their leaving by way of the only trail I can find that leads out of this secluded retreat."

Having made up his mind to his course, King Kendall acted promptly.

He was not afraid to remain alone; but if he had a companion to relieve him at times of the work and watching, he felt that he could do better.

He soon prepared his breakfast, and then

set to work to cut down some small trees and barricade the crevice in the rocks that led out of the retreat.

He first led his horse through and hitched him outside, taking one of the pack-animals and leaving Comrade.

Then he turned the other animals loose, so that they could get plenty of food and water, and next hid all of his packs away among the rocks.

Then he built the barrier, and climbing over it, mounted his horse and set out upon his trip.

A few miles from the retreat his trail ran by the mouth of a small canyon that penetrated back into a wild-looking mountain spur.

Here his eyes fell upon what appeared to be a fresh track.

Dismounting he followed it, and it led into the narrow canyon.

A walk of a quarter of a mile, and, to his surprise, he came to a novel barrier.

It was a rope fence stretched across the canyon from side to side, the said rope having been made of green bark torn in long strips from trees and braided together.

There were four of these lines, intersected with posts, to form a fence.

Here King Kendall halted, and hitching his horse, said:

"I must go slow, for this means occupation."

He leaped over the barrier, and turning a curve of the canyon saw several horses feeding near.

"The very animals that I found in the Indian's retreat he muttered.

Then, with rifle in hand, he moved cautiously forward, dodging from tree to tree that grew on the canyon's sides.

At length he came to what appeared to be the head of the canyon.

It ended in a precipice over a hundred feet in height, and over it came tumbling a waterfall.

Boldly he pushed on right up to the waterfall, and beheld under it a large space with a cave beyond.

Into this he went, ready in an instant to greet a foe should he meet one.

A low moan caught his ear, and going into an alcove of the cave he beheld a form lying upon a skin couch before him.

"By Heaven! it is the Red Renard!" he cried, and he quickly knelt by his side.

The Indian looked haggard and emaciated, and in his look there was no recognition of him.

He lay near a small pool that a rivulet formed in the cave, and as Kendall eyed him he feebly dipped a cloth into the water and then placed it upon his wound.

Kendall critically examined the wound and made a small incision with his lancet that helped the flow of pus that had been retarded, and then dressed it skillfully, pouring upon the cloth a healing ointment he took from the little case attached to his belt.

"How in Heaven's name this poor Indian got here is a mystery to me."

"But now I have found him, I will remain and watch him until he is dead, or recovers."

"If he came here alone, I confess I cannot see how he did it."

"He is either delirious, or feigns it, to avoid recognizing me; but he has fever and I will doctor him as best I can."

He administered a dose of medicine, prepared more in a tin cup he found near, and having done all he could for the comfort of the wounded red-skin, he started down the canyon to bring his horse into the inclosure; for, come what might, he was determined to remain by the Indian to the last, though he held hopes of his recovery if he was properly cared for.

His horse had broken the limb to which he had hitched him, and had strayed down the canyon.

Instantly Kendall went in pursuit; but when the perverse animal saw him approaching he took to his heels.

As the horse had his saddle, bridle and trappings on, the young miner would not allow him to escape, so continued the chase.

But the animal seemed beset with Satan, and awaiting his approach to a certain distance would then go bounding away.

Thus an hour or more passed and King Kendall had gone nearly three miles from the cave.

At length, feeling that darkness would soon fall, and determined not to follow the animal further, or lose his trappings, he threw his rifle to his shoulder and drew trigger.

With the crack of the rifle the horse dropped dead, and Kendall hastening forward, soon stripped him of his saddle and bridle, and started upon his return to the cave.

He arrived at the barrier, to suddenly discover that not a horse was in sight within the canyon.

He had left them there only a little over an hour before, but nowhere could he see them.

The barrier remained unbroken, so they had not gone that way.

Hastening on to the cave, the only other means of egress that he could see from the canyon, he saw no trail of them having gone in that direction.

What could it mean?

Quickly he sprung toward the cave, and glanced into the rocky alcove where he had left the wounded red-skin.

The place was empty.

The couch, the Indian, were gone, and the place was deserted.

"Good God! I am indeed in a haunted land," cried King Kendall, his face turning white with emotion, as he stood staring at the spot, where a short while before he had left, lying helpless and hovering between life and death, the sorely wounded Indian chief, who a second time had disappeared like magic, although certainly not able to stand upright.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE HAUNTED CAVERN.

It was certainly a most painful situation for a man to be in, that in which King Kendall found himself, there alone in that cave, among scenes that he had reason to believe had never been visited by a white man before.

A second time the wounded Indian had escaped from him, and in a manner that seemed both miraculous and supernatural.

For some moments he stood in silence and lost in deep thought.

Then he determined to search the place as thoroughly as he could.

It was already growing somber without, with the setting of the sun, and the cavern was getting very dark and dismal.

He had seen, just outside, the ashes of a fire, and near it some pine torches.

Quickly he went out and took up one of them.

Taking a match from a waterproof box he always carried, he lighted it and ignited the torch.

With this he invaded the cavern.

It was spacious, high and had several tunnel-like corridors running back from the main chamber near the entrance.

The one to the right he determined to take first, and he fastened the torch to the end of his rifle, and carrying it above his head, penetrated into the depths of the cavern.

The sides were smooth, the ceiling high, so that there was ample space for a horseman to pass along that way.

It must lead somewhere he knew, and just where he determined to find out.

On the flooring there were numerous tracks, as though made by a hoof, and convinced that he would make some important discovery, he went on his way.

He was well aware that he labored under dreadful disadvantages, for carrying a torch as he did he could be seen a long way off, and perhaps a shot might greet him.

On, on he went, however, until he came where a stream crossed the tunnel.

It ran down one side of the rock into a pool, and then found its way out under one wall of the rocky passage.

Beyond, the cavern still extended, and still on he meant to go.

The little pool was about seven feet wide, but he could leap it, and he did so.

But alas! he had but lightly tied the torch to his rifle, so that it could be readily shaken off if need be, and the jump shook it loose, and falling into the pool it was extinguished.

In total darkness, King Kendall felt the full peril of the situation.

The leap across had been a longer one than

he had anticipated, and he had noticed that the pool was very deep, and the current rushed into the aperture under the wall with terrific force.

If he fell into the basin, in springing back, he might be carried under the rocky wall before he could extricate himself.

Then, too, he had also seen that the other side was of sharp rocks, and missing it in his leap he might severely hurt himself.

For a long time he stood pondering what to do.

Then he concluded to continue on along the tunnel and endeavor to find an opening.

If he did not soon do so, he would return to the pool, undress himself, throw his clothing and rifle across, and then plunge through as best he could.

Using his rifle-barrel as a cane he went slowly along to suddenly come bolt up against a wall.

On either side the cavern extended, he discovered by feeling his way, and he knew not which way to go.

"Turn to the right as the law directs," he said, grimly, and he took the passage on his right hand.

But it was not very long before he could not feel any wall upon either side.

"I am in a large rotunda it seems to me, and my chances are anything but cheering," he muttered.

Presently he felt his rifle-muzzle meet no resistance, and he halted quickly.

There was a descent before him.

Perhaps it was another pool, perhaps an abyss.

Then he thought of his matches and taking out his box lighted one.

He discovered a vast rotunda above him, and that he was in a large rock chamber many feet across.

At his feet was a chasm only a yard across, but it seemed to have no bottom.

Another match revealed to him the fact that a dozen rocky corridors branched out from the large chamber.

Which one he had come he could not tell in that uncertain light.

Which one to go he did not know.

"I am likely to make a ghost of myself in this infernal hole, and the fate of King Kendall will ever remain a mystery," he muttered.

Again his match burned out, and he stood in the blackness of the place bitterly pondering.

Suddenly a light flashed upon his eyes.

It grew stronger and stronger, and flickered upon the rocky walls of one of the corridors.

What could it be, who could it be?

Then it grew brighter and brighter, and a torch came in view.

But the one who held it?

"My God! if spirits of the dead can walk this earth, yonder is one," cried King Kendall.

Adown one of the corridors stood the holder of the torch.

It appeared like a woman's form, a woman's spirit rather, for it was slight in figure and clothed in white from head to feet.

One hand grasped a torch that seemed to Kendall to burn with a sickly hue, and the other beckoned to him to approach.

"I can be no worse off following, than in standing here.

"I will go; though, if it looked more like a man and less like a woman, I would try the effect of my rifle upon it."

So saying he leaped across the chasm and started toward the phantom-like looking being.

Instantly it receded from him, yet still beckoned him on.

He walked faster, but it maintained the same distance from him.

On, on it led him until he felt that half a mile must have been passed over.

Then suddenly the torch went out and the specter vanished.

"My God! this cavern is haunted," cried Kendall, now more deeply impressed with what he had seen than ever before in his life.

At first the darkness was tangible, after the going out of the torch.

Then a dim light was visible ahead, the outline of an arch was traceable, and going forward for a hundred feet he stepped out of the cavern into the open, pure air.

The stars shone brightly above him, and he saw that he was upon the side of a hill.

It was not the place where he had entered the cavern, as he could plainly see.

Then he started as an object met his view.

It was white, and looked ghostly in the darkness.

But it was a horse, as a second glance showed him.

Stepping to its side he found it bore his own saddle and bridle, which he had left at the other entrance to the cavern.

What it meant he did not know, but he mounted the horse, which he now recognized as an animal he had seen in the Indian's retreat first, and afterward in the barkline barrier.

"Well, my skepticism is shaken to its foundation, and I almost believe in ghosts; but I shall use this horse, if it be even a specter animal."

So saying, he mounted the horse and rode slowly down the mountain-side toward a valley far below him.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A FRUITLESS CHASE.

WITHOUT further adventure King Kendall continued on his way and, after some difficulty in getting on the right trail to Bonanza City, arrived in that interesting place after nightfall, the second day following his departure from the Haunted Cave.

As he crossed the Overland bridge on his way to the Free and Easy, where he intended to put up during his stay in Bonanza City, he beheld through an open window of the saloon the scenes transpiring within.

To his horror, too, for he certainly was horrified at the sight, he saw none other than Red Renard, the Sioux Miner, seated at a table, and before him a bottle of wine.

Instantly King Kendall dismounted, and gaining a position where he could look into the saloon, gazed fixedly at the red-skin.

"There is no doubt of it; he is the same red-skin that came into our camp on the march to the Lost Gold Mine, and the one whom I afterward found on the cliff wounded, and again in the alcove of the Haunted Cavern.

"The last two times I saw him he was nearly dead, and yet he mysteriously disappeared, and now he appears here apparently in perfect health, though he has a haggard look.

"Yes; it is the same face, the same form, and the same dress— Ah! he is in trouble, for I see that infamous wretch Buck Bradley there.

"I'll interfere, and this time keep my eye on the Indian, for I wish no better comrade and he is the one that must go to the Gold Hills with me.

"It becomes interesting within; so I will enter."

With this, King Kendall boldly walked into the Free and Easy saloon, and the result the reader already knows.

When he left the saloon, and the Indian, whom he did not see, prevented Buck Bradley from killing him, King Kendall was determined to find the red-skin, go where he might.

He caught sight of him as he darted away after giving the Bravo the blow with his tomahawk, and would have immediately followed him, but for the fear that he might have been thought to have acted the part of an assassin, and then run off.

So he stood his ground until the crowd heard the story of the Bravo's intended assassination, and then, having noted the way which Red Renard had taken, he started in pursuit.

Gaining his horse, he beheld a horseman in the distance just crossing the Overland bridge toward the mountains.

Feeling assured that it was the Red Renard he gave chase.

The hoofstrokes of his horse on the bridge seemed to warn the horseman in advance that he was pursued, and he spurred ahead at a lively pace.

Instantly King Kendall did likewise, and it became a hot race.

The one in advance either did not care to increase his distance, or could not, for he just held his own.

As for King Kendall, he urged his horse to the utmost, yet could not gain an inch.

It was the same white animal which he had found at the cave entrance, and though possessed of endurance, seemed to have only ordinary speed.

Frequently did the young miner wish that he had his own fleet horse, Comrade, for then, as he said:

"I could run down a bird."

All through the night, going deeper and deeper into the depths of the mountains, the pursued led the pursuer.

The leader had ceased his fast pace, for the horse could not stand it, and had settled down to a jog; but when Kendall made a spurt, to come upon the one he followed, he found that he could not gain an atom.

It might be the Indian, and it might not.

But the daylight would show, and until it did, Kendall would not give up the chase.

He could bring down the man, or horse, with a shot from his rifle; but that he did not wish to do.

He wished to gain the friendship of Red Renard, and if that was he ahead, he would not consider it a friendly act to be fired upon.

Over mountains, through valleys, into canyons, and across streams the two men rode, and at last dawn began to draw near.

Then the horseman in advance spurred up his animal and began to drop his pursuer.

It was in vain that Kendall urged his tired animal on, for he could not stand the strain, and he soon lost sight of the one he had so persistently followed.

Then dawn came, and King Kendall, having halted for half an hour to await its coming, and to give his horse a rest, took up the trail of the one he was now determined to follow to the bitter end.

Further into the hills he went until at last he was compelled to call a halt, for his horse could go no further.

It was hours before the animal was sufficiently rested to go on again, and then he pushed on but slowly.

At dark the trail could not be followed, and the young miner went into camp, with the remark:

"I'll follow it to the end."

The next morning bright and early he was again on the trail, and pushing ahead for several hours he at last came to a mountain stream.

Here he lost it.

In vain was it that he searched for the tracks, for they disappeared in the stream and could not be found.

No trace of where they came out was visible, and at last King Kendall was compelled to give it up, and he set out on his way back to Bonanza City.

But the spirit came over him to change his mind and go to Fairy City, and there look for some comrade in whom he could trust, and with him return to the mysterious country about the Death Mountains.

His horse was so nearly used up that he was thinking of first going to Bonanza City and getting a remount, when all of a sudden into view rolled the Overland stage, and five minutes after he was a passenger in it along with the veiled woman, who had certainly shown strange emotion at sight of him, though he had not deemed himself the cause, other than attributing her behavior to alarm at his boarding the coach as he did.

When Slippery Jim had halted the stage by shooting Old Hickory as he did, King Kendall had cleverly sent a bullet through his brain, and would have sprung out to meet the coming of any others who might be there, when the veiled woman prevented him by throwing her arms about him, and at the same time calling his attention to the single horseman pursued by a number of others, who just then dashed down a canyon into full view.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RED-SKIN DRIVER.

WHEN King Kendall beheld the coming of the horsemen down the canyon, directly upon the coach, he had been struck with astonishment at recognizing, in the one in advance, and pursued by the others, the Red Renard, himself.

The horse of the red-skin had evidently been hard pressed, and the shots of his pursuers brought him to the ground.

But his agile rider did not go with him,

for he caught upon his feet, turned, tore something from his saddle and bounded toward the stage-coach with giant leaps.

The young miner did not then know that the driver, Old Hickory, was dead, and shouted to him:

"Open on them lively, pard, and I'll keep time with my weapons."

"Gold Buzzards!" shouted Red Renard, as he came bounding along, as a warning to King Kendall, whom he saw in the coach-window.

The young miner had now drawn his revolvers, and though the veiled woman still clung to him with a despairing energy, he opened fire from the windows upon the nearest horseman.

The result was that a rider tumbled from his saddle, and a second shot brought down a horse.

At the same moment Red Renard drew near, and, with a mighty leap, sprung to the box of the stage-coach, at the same time uttering one of his wild and ringing war-cries.

"Drive on, pard! Lay on your whip, and I'll keep them at bay!" shouted King Kendall.

But, as he spoke, the coach started off with a bound, and Red Renard called out:

"Stage man dead; me drive quick!"

It was not a pleasant sensation for King Kendall, or the veiled woman either, to feel that the only one on the box was an Indian.

He might be a brave man, a superb trailer, a dead shot, and unsurpassed rider; but when it came to a red-skin holding the ribbons over six-in-hand, it was another thing.

The road was a dangerous one, King Kendall knew, for he had been over it.

The horses were wild, and for the reins to be in the hands of an Indian, untutored in driving, it looked bad for the whole outfit, and King Kendall intended to scramble on top and himself take the ribbons.

But this he could not just then do, for right at the rear of the coach appeared a horseman, whirling a lariat with the intention to catch the horses.

Instantly King Kendall fired, and the man went headlong to the ground.

But others were at hand, and they kept the young miner busy.

A hot fusilade was now begun upon the coach, and, as the horses seemed to be kept in the road, King Kendall devoted himself to beating off the Gold Buzzards, who were urged hard in chase.

Hastily raising the cushions, he somewhat rudely placed the veiled woman in a heap upon the front seat, and piled them up about her as a protection, for now and then a bullet crashed through the coach.

"Sit there!" he said, in an authoritative tone.

"I will, if you do not attempt to leave the coach," was the hoarse reply.

"I will not— Ha! we turned that curve well—yes, by Heaven! that Indian knows how to drive!" he cried, admiringly, as the horses swept around a dangerous curve in the trail and then went flying along where the road ran upon a narrow shelf.

Satisfied that the man on the box, red-skin though he was, could handle the ribbons with skill, King Kendall turned his attention to beating off the Gold Buzzards.

The outlaws were now rushing along at the full speed of their horses, and keeping up a constant fire; but the Indian driver kept the stage-coach team at a flying pace, wound in and out with skill as the trail ran, and turned the sharp curves in a manner that could not be surpassed.

First from one window and then the other King Kendall fired his revolvers, and seldom without injury or death to man or horse, so that the Gold Buzzards fought a little shy of crowding too close upon their foe's deadly weapons.

They seemed to expect to see the coach come to grief, or to run the horses down under the heavy weight they dragged.

Also, they tried to shoot the horses, but the Indian, seemingly anticipating this, kept the coach as much as possible as a shield between them.

True, several of the horses had been wounded slightly, but they still held on well.

The Gold Buzzards also tried to riddle the coach with bullets, in hope of killing the daring man who kept them at bay; but there was baggage on behind, the rear wall of the coach was thick, and only now and then did a ball penetrate it, and then did no damage.

Suddenly a steep hill appeared in the trail ahead.

It was only a few rods to the top, but the ascent was very steep, and the horses were compelled to check their pace in going up.

Then the Gold Buzzards dashed up in a mass, and leaning from one window, King Kendall made his revolvers rattle in a lively way, and bring death to the outlaws.

But they still pressed nearer, until suddenly the young miner heard a loud command:

"Halt all!"

Instantly the Gold Buzzard drew rein, and then King Kendall saw the cause.

The veiled woman stood in the road, her face toward the outlaws, her hands raised as though to warn them back.

In a moment, when he was leaning out of the window firing, the veiled woman had slipped out of the other door and sprung to the ground, for up the steep hill the coach was necessarily going very slow.

King Kendall had twice urged her back, when he saw her rise and look out; but he had not anticipated such an act upon her part.

"Hold, chief! The woman has sprung out!" he shouted to Red Renard, at first intending to attempt her rescue.

But the red-skin seemed to appreciate the utter madness of such an attempt, and drove on again at full speed, when the coach reached the level ground.

To the amazement of King Kendall, as he glanced back through the dust and smoke, he saw that the Gold Buzzards did not follow further.

They had given up the chase.

Utterly worn out by his exertions, he sunk upon the back seat to rest, while on the coach sped.

For some moments he sat there, and then observed that the horses were slackening their pace.

"That Indian is the best driver I ever saw."

"I thought I could handle the reins well, but I yield the palm to him, for this is no road to drive in a run."

"He knows the Gold Buzzards have given it up, and will soon stop for a rest, and then I'll be face to face with the remarkable man."

"But what on earth caused that veiled woman to do as she did, I wonder?"

"It seems to me I heard her say something about finding the one she looked for; but in the excitement I did not listen, and thought she was talking from fright."

"Can it be possible that she recognized some one among those outlaws?"

"They certainly stopped at her command—Ah! the Indian is changing rein, and I will get out and join him upon the box."

As he spoke the stage rolled up alongside of a huge rock, which like a cliff overhung the road, and came to a halt.

As King Kendall made an effort to open the door, he saw something flit over his head, and just caught sight of Red Renard as he sprung to the rock from the top of the stage-coach.

He did not understand the motive, and hastily tried to open the door, but the coach was too near the rock, and he went to the other side.

The handle of this door had been broken off by a bullet, and he had some little difficulty in getting out.

But at last he sprung to the ground.

The Indian was nowhere visible.

The horses had been stopped by the rock, and stood panting and covered with foam after their hard run.

Springing upon the box, King Kendall saw that the brake was on full, and the reins had been neatly turned around one of the lamps.

Standing up, he marked the leap which the Indian had made upon the rock.

He hallooed, but no answer came.

He called him by name, but got no response.

Above the rock grew a thicket of pines,

and these extended up the mountain-side to a great height.

Springing over on the rock, he looked about for the trail of the red-skin.

In that hard, rocky soil none had been left.

"By the great sun worshipers! but that Indian is a queer one."

"The only way for me to catch him is to kill him," muttered King Kendall, deeply disappointed at the flight of the red-skin.

"Well," he continued, springing back upon the box of the stage coach, "this is a predicament to be caught in."

"A coach-and-six, no passengers, and I to be the driver."

"Well, it goes through to Fairy City, and I will look into the pockets of the dead driver for instructions."

He turned as he spoke to poor Hickory, when he was surprised to see the eyes of the supposed dead man fastened upon him.

"Pard, I hain't in the least dead yit," was the low reply of Old Hickory.

"My poor fellow, I deemed you dead; but what can I do for you?" asked King Kendall, kindly, bending over the wounded man, who was gasping for breath, a bullet-wound being in his throat.

"Pard, I are a goner, and I knows it; but Lordy! didn't thet wild Injun make thet old huss hum?" and a smile came upon the pallid face.

"He are ther best driver I ever seen draw ther ribbons, and he slung my old carkiss on top, so as I wouldn't fall off, for he believed me dead, and I jist lay a-watchin' him."

"He handled them ribbons beautiful, and played ther silk onter ther ponies in a way thet made 'em fly."

"But then he hauled up and skipped without a word, and here we is."

"Yes; but let me see your wound, for perhaps—"

"Pard, 'tain't no use, and thar are no pre-haps fer me."

"I is a goner, and I knows it, so you'll hev to run the old huss inter Fairy City, and tell 'em when yer gits back ter Bonanza City that I died at my post—hark! doesn't yer hear hoofs a-comin'?"

"By Heaven! you are right, and we are to have more music," cried King Kendall, as he took up his rifle and prepared for deadly work.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE DEATH BY THE ROADSIDE.

WHEN the dying driver, for Old Hickory had indeed received his death-wound, heard the sound of hoof-falls, and King Kendall stood on his guard, still mounted upon the box of the stage coach, both expected a return of the Gold Buzzards.

The young miner determined to await the nearer approach of the horsemen, and if they proved to be the Gold Buzzards, he would start the team in full flight again, and, with the rest which they had, he hoped he could keep ahead of the outlaws, especially as they would have quite a long start from the time they appeared in sight.

If they came from the opposite direction, of course he could not turn the coach around in that narrow road, and so must fight it out at bay.

"They seems ter be comin' down ther trail, pard," said Old Hickory, whose ears were by no means yet dulled in their hearing by the approach of death.

"Yes, they come on the trail from Fairy City; but we will have to face them, be they who they may."

"You will, pard, and if you do half what yer did ter-day, thar'll be howlin' in ther camp."

"My Lordy! but I never seen jist two sich pilgrims as you an' thet Injun is."

"Pard, I am slippin' away from 'arth rather lively, and I hev a word ter say."

"I hev been a bad man in my way, but I hes hed much ter put me out with human natur'."

"I expected I'd be kilt some day in a row, and I are glad ter hev it said I died doin' of my duty."

"You did, indeed, old man," earnestly said King Kendall, his eyes upon the bend in the road.

"I hed it said ter me by my side-pard, Slippery Jim, ter rob ther coach, ef I got ter drive it, and he'd help me; but I told him I

were not the kind o' a gerloot, so he rode on ahead, and you seen what he did?"

"Yes, and I killed him."

"Yer did, fer a fact, and I does hope I hain't goin' his way arter death."

"No, you have a good heart, my man, and died doing your duty, so don't fear that it will go hard with you hereafter."

"Them is cheerin' words, pard, and I'd like ter hev yer chief mourner at my buryin'."

"Jist carry me back ter Bonanza ter plant me, fer yer kin wrap me in a blankit and give me a free ride on top ther huss, and take me back with yer."

"I'll do it, my friend."

"Tell Parson Pete ter shout over me and plant me up in Kingdom Come Cem'try."

"But I must tell yer, pard, thet I hev a box o' tin under ther rear seat thet belongs ter Doctor Dick."

"He wants it tarned over ter ther Express Comp'ny at Fairy City, and a receipt give fer it, and they'll put it through to his banker's, accordin' to direcshuns."

"I'll attend to it."

"The gal passenger I was ter take ter Fairy City; but she tuk herself off, so thet let me out."

"Yes."

"Now, parā, thet are all, 'cept'in' yer promise ter see me planted, and tell ther boys I did my duty— Yonder comes ther horsemen, and they is sojers."

"You are right; they are soldiers," said King Kendall, as a horseman in uniform rode into view around the bend, followed by a score of troopers.

Catching sight of the stage-coach, they halted suddenly, and then came on at a gallop, to draw rein near.

"Well, sir, you have had warm work, it looks like," said the young officer, gazing upon King Kendall, with evident admiration at his striking appearance, then at the dying driver, and next at the scarred coach and the tired horses.

"Yes, captain, we had a race for life for a couple of miles, and this poor fellow, the driver, has received a mortal wound," was the cool reply.

"Yas, cap'n, my checks is called in, and I are goin' pretty lively, for a side-pard o' mine sprung a trap on me, and ther Gold Buzzards chipped in, and ther devil were ter pay, with a beggin' pardon fer a cuss-word from a man so near ther grave."

"Pray tell me just what has occurred," the young officer asked of King Kendall, who told the facts as they were, with an occasional interruption from Old Hickory in praise of the young miner and the Indian.

"The young girl escaped, you say, to the Gold Buzzards?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you know not her motive?"

"No, sir, unless it was because she recognized one of their number, or, in reality, was one of their band."

"It is very strange; but she may be, as you suggest, one of their number."

"Yet I cannot account for the Indian's flight."

"Nor I, sir, and he is a most mysterious person, whom I would like to know more of."

"You say he is Red Renard, the Sioux Miner."

"Yes, sir."

"He is a remarkable character, sir, and I have seen him at the fort, where he has come to visit the colonel; but his business seems always of a private nature, and he is, as you say, a most mysterious person, and I have heard it suggested that he is secretly in the Government service and a detective."

"Indeed! I can well believe it, sir— Ah! my poor friend here is dead."

A gasp for breath had called the attention of King Kendall to the driver, and in a moment Old Hickory breathed his last.

"Poor fellow; but will you drive the coach on, sir?"

"Yes, captain, to Fairy City and back to Bonanza City."

"You are certainly not a driver of the Overland?"

"No, sir. I am a miner."

"Indeed?" and the officer glanced at the handsome attire, diamonds and gold chain of the young miner, and mentally thought that he looked more like a border sport.

"My name is Bradford Bentley, sir, and I am a captain in the army."

"May I ask your name?" said the officer, politely.

"Certainly; it is King Kendall."

"Ah! I have heard of you; for some miners drop into the fort now and then, and you were reported as the dead shot of Bonanza City, and were a giant in strength."

"They flattered me, Captain Bentley; but as you may be able to come upon the Gold Buzzards down the trail, for they will be looking after their dead and wounded, I will not detain you."

"Shall my men not bury your comrade for you, Mr. Kendall?"

"No, thank you, sir; for I promised him I would take him back to Bonanza for burial, and I will do so."

"It is kind of you; but good-by, and I will report your fight at Bonanza, while, if you hear aught of the veiled lady, kindly drop me a line at the fort."

King Kendall promised to do so, and while the soldiers rode on at a gallop, he rolled a blanket about Old Hickory's body, placed him in the coach, and drove on toward Fairy City.

CHAPTER XL.

A PROMISE THAT WAS KEPT.

FAIRY CITY gained its name on account of its situation, for it was located in the mountains, at a point where the mountain crags and cliffs, under the rosy and golden tint of the setting sun, gave one the idea of Castles of Fairyland.

The town proper was of less importance than was Golden City, for it was a camp of five hundred souls, scattered along the mountains in search of gold.

A better name for it would have been Shantyville, for it boasted of only one pretentious structure, and that was known under the title of the Fairy Queen's Grotto.

In appearance it was not a grotto, and no fairy queen could have survived there more than one meal.

The proprietor was a Dutchman, fat, jolly and rich, so he enjoyed life.

His house was the poorest, his table the worst, and his beds as bad as the liquor he sold; but his prices were enormous.

Fairy City had a crow over the Bonanza City in that an Express came there once a month, and it was a shipping-point for gold-dust, for the fort was only a few miles distant, and gold-trains from that point were guarded by soldiers.

The Fairy Queen's Grotto was but one story high, yet it occupied an acre of space.

It was the stopping and starting point of the stage-coaches. Up to its door did King Kendall drive with the dead driver his only passenger a couple of hours after nightfall of the day of the attack of the Gold Buzzards.

He was on time, and a crowd were at the tavern to receive the coach, as was their wont.

All could see, as the horses dashed into the light of the pine torches with which the stable-boys came out to meet it, that the horses had been hard driven, and also that a new man held the reins.

Tossing the reins to either side, King Kendall sprung lightly to the ground.

He was a stranger in Fairy City, except to Dutchy, as the landlord was familiarly called by the miners.

And Dutchy had seen him but once before, when he stopped all night at his tavern on the way to Bonanza City.

"Vell, vell, vat ish it, mine fri'nt, ant v're vas Rattler t'e triver?" called out Dutchy, as he advanced toward the coach, a crowd at his heels.

"As I understand it, sir, Rattler, fell and broke his leg and another driver took his place."

"That other driver is in the coach, dead, and I took the box, being a passenger, and there was no one else to run the stage in."

"I would like first to see the Express agent," was King Kendall's response.

"I has the mans right here."

"Vat vas it you vants, mine fri'nt, and tell us apout t'e troubles, for t'e vehicles looks like a pepper-box mit t'e holes in it, and t'e horses is wounded."

"Yes, we had a hot run of it from the Gold Buzzards; but I met the soldiers and they went in pursuit."

"As you are the Express-agent, I give to you these papers, and turn over to you a box of dust which you will find under the rear seat."

"Please give me your receipt for them, and then let a man watch the coach all night, with the driver's body in it, and I will pay him well for his services."

"When does the coach start back?"

"At six o'clocks mit t'e mornings, mine fri'nt."

"Very well, I will drive it back."

"Now, gentlemen, let us take a drink," and King Kendall led the way to the bar-room.

Dutchy took a peep into the coach, and the dead driver tumbled into his arms.

With a yell he started back, but realizing the cause, that the jolting had thrown him against the door, he called to the stable-boys to pick him up and bury him, while he took the gold-box out.

This he took into his office and locked up, and then joined the crowd at the bar.

"Come, landlord, what will you have, for I am waiting to see what you drink before I order, and then I know I will not be poisoned?" said Kendall.

"Here vas t'e receipts, mine fri'nt, ant I vas takes schnapps, for I vas a Dutchmans, and as t'ere vas no beers, Schietam schnapps vas all I drinks, and I vas fetch 'em over from Germany."

"Well, give me the same."

"Gentlemen, your very good health and prosperity."

"Cigars all around, please. Now what do I owe you?" and King Kendall turned to the bartender.

The latter saw the sly wink of the landlord and named an exorbitant price.

Without a word Kendall paid it when Dutchy whispered:

"You vas a tuyfil fool, Hans, that you don't vas say more," and turning to Kendall he said:

"I vas pay t'e mens, mine fr'int, for t'e buryin', and t'ey vill need some drinks ven t'ey comes pack."

"It vas ten tollars each I vas gives them, ant you vill pay for their drinks, too, I vas guess."

"Yes, for drinks to all hands; but what have I to do with a burial?"

"T'e deat mans."

"If I kill a man I'll see him decently buried, or I'll pay the score if some poor fellow has no friends to bury him."

"It vas t'e triver, mine fri'nt."

"What! have you dared to have that man buried?" and King Kendall's eyes flashed.

"It vas petter that he pe buried, if he vas dead, don't it?"

"No, for I promised him to carry his body back to Bonanza City, and I shall do so."

"Quick! go and have the men dig him up and put him in the coach, and here is a fifty for their extra work."

A cheer greeted the words of Kendall, and remarks went the rounds that he "was a man from his boots up."

"Vell, mine fri'nt, I vill have it done, put it vas hard vork for t'e poor fellows," and with a sigh Dutchy departed upon his errand.

As he well knew, the stablemen had not yet taken Old Hickory away to bury him and so he said:

"Poys, I vill not have t'e mans planted to-nights, so von of you watch mit t'e podys and I vill gives you five tollars."

"I'll do it, boss," said a seedy fellow, and giving him his pay, Dutchy returned to the bar-room with a distressed look upon his face, for he regretted not having offered three dollars for the night's vigil.

King Kendall had already asked to be shown to a room and retired, so that Dutchy did not see him again until morning.

Disgusted with his poor breakfast, Kendall started out to mount the box, and leave upon his return trip to Bonanza City, when he heard loud voices without.

A crowd had gathered, and seeing him, Dutchy said:

"T'ere vas three gentlemen that vas go mit you as bassengers, mine fri'nt."

"All right, let them get on board, for I have no desire to tarry longer in Fairyland."

"But t'ey vill not let t'e podys go along," continued Dutchy.

"Will not what?"

"T'e gentlemans vill not let t'e dead mans ride in t'e hearse."

"A hearse is the place for a dead man to ride, and Old Hickory goes through, for I pay his fare; how much is it?"

"It vas fifty tollars."

"The fare is twenty-five, I believe?"

"Yes, for a live mans; put a dead mans vas not sit up like a gentlemans, and vas—"

"Here are fifty dollars, so mark it paid—Hold on there, what are you doing?" and King Kendall stepped forward quickly as several men were dragging the blanket-wrapped body of poor Old Hickory out of the coach.

"We don't ide with no stiff," growled one of the men.

Then stay here," was the indifferent response.

"We don't stay here, and we don't go with no dead folks."

"Then you don't go this trip out on that coach, for I intend to take that body back to Bonanza City."

"Yer'll not do it," said the first speaker, while a second one said:

"I has suthin' ter say about it, pard."

"And so hev I, young feller," promptly added a third.

"Gentlemen, that body goes in that coach, and I drive."

"I have paid double fare, and I'll put my passenger on the back seat, seeing as you have kicked up a row about it, and if you don't like it, just stay behind."

The words were said clearly and with the utmost distinctness.

There was no doubting that King Kendall meant what he said, and most of the crowd saw this; but the three intended passengers were stubborn, and besides they were bravos of the worst kind.

They had been drifting through the mines causing trouble, and spreading terror, and Bonanza City was their destination, for as they had said to the Fairylanders:

"They was goin' thar ter clip spurs off o' high-flyin' gerloots."

They saw in King Kendall a well-dressed handsome, dashing young man, whom they had not the slightest dread of, from the simple fact that they were not readers of human nature.

"Waal, we goes on ther huss, ther stiff stays ahind, and you'll get yer feathers pulled ef yer says a word ag'in' it, and one o' us drives ter Bonanza."

The speaker was the wickedest-looking one of the trio, and he had his hand upon his revolver as he spoke, as had also the others, his comrades.

There was something in the appearance of things that caused the crowd to spring quickly to each side out of range, for they saw lightning in the eyes of the young miner.

Dutchy, feeling an interest in one he had so systematically robbed, cried out:

"Run, young man, for those gerloots vas terrors all t'e times."

"Run mit your legs pretty quick!"

King Kendall smiled, and his face was perfectly serene, excepting the burning in his eyes.

He was quietly buttoning his gloves on, preparatory to mounting the box, but said in his pleasant way.

"Gentlemen, stand aside, for I drive that team, and I take that dead body with me."

"I'll clip yer wings, yer infernal dandy, and I'arn yer—"

The speaker was drawing his revolver as he spoke, but seemingly in no hurry about it, as King Kendall was still fastening his glove.

But suddenly there came a flash and report, then another, and with a lightning-like spring King Kendall was upon the third one of the trio, and before he could recover his surprise at what had happened, he received a blow in his face that sent him to earth stunned; but he was in better condition than his comrades for they were dead, each with a small bullet-hole in the center of his forehead.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE WARNING IN SHADOW VALLEY.

So sudden had been the two shots of King Kendall, so rapid and so deadly, that the crowd hardly knew who fired them.

They had expected "music," as they expressed it, and their sympathy was with the young miner.

They were glad to see the Terrible Trio, as they called the three bullies, depart, for they had left graves in Fairy City as a souvenir of their short sojourn there.

They had seen the spokesman of the three drawing his pistol, a second with his weapon already in his hand, the third with his grasp upon his revolver-butt as it rested in the belt, and they feared for King Kendall and pitied his seeming indifference.

Then, without seeing him move his hands, as he was buttoning his glove, they saw the flashes and heard the reports, beheld the two men drop dead, and the third, ere he could draw a weapon, fall his length, struck down by a blow that rung out as a kick might have done.

And then, cool, smiling, seemingly indifferent, stood King Kendall, gazing down upon the man he had felled, and who, half-stunned, still had sense enough to lay where he had fallen, while he growled forth:

"Were it a pile-driver thet hit me, pard?"

"No, sir, I slapped your face, and I hope you will not cause me to send you after your comrades, whose funeral expenses I will pay."

"Here, take this, and give them a send off," and he tossed a roll of bank notes to the fallen bully, while the crowd burst forth in a ringing cheer.

"You is a whole team, pard, and I are sorry at ther leetle onpleasantness atween us, I is fer a fact, and I guesses my pards is more sorrier."

"I'll give 'em a grand buryin', as it are your treat, an' ef I runs across yer ag'in I wants ter know yer, fer yer is the all-firedest deceivin'-lookin' man fer yer looks I ever seen, as durned ef I thought thar was fight in yer, and yit I finds yer a tiger on his travels."

"You git on ther box, pard, and I puts ther stiff in on ther back seat and wishes yer well."

The bully arose as he spoke, wiped his sleeve across his bleeding face, and taking up the body of Old Hickory, placed it upon the back seat of the coach, while King Kendall, with a bound, was on the box, and, seizing the reins, drove off in a style that convinced the crowd, who gave him a rousing cheer as a send-off, that he was as much at home with the ribbons as he had been with the derringer he so skillfully slipped from his sleeves to kill the two bullies.

As King Kendall sent the fresh team along at a lively pace, he suddenly came in sight of the party of soldiers he had met the day before.

Captain Bradford Bentley motioned to him to draw rein, and called out:

"Well, Mr. Kendall, I saw your terrible work of yesterday, for we had four bodies to bury, and as many horses fell also, while I am confident you wounded some of the outlaws, too."

"I could not find aught of the veiled lady, and as the Gold Buzzards had retreated into their fastnesses, I went on to Bonanza City and reported your work, and the boys will give you a rousing welcome."

"But I'll not detain you, only to say if you get time come and visit me at the fort."

King Kendall thanked the officer, who went on his way to Fairy City where he heard of more of the deadly work of the young miner.

And on its way rolled the coach until the slope appeared in view that must take it into the Shadow Valley.

But the daring man on the box only halted for awhile, to give the horses water and a breathing-spell and look to his weapons, placing his rifle on the top near him, and his revolvers by him upon the seat.

Then the coach rolled on into the Shadow Valley.

It had gone nearly through, having passed the scene of Slippery Jim's ambush, when suddenly a form appeared in the road ahead.

"It is the veiled woman, as I live."

"But is she alone?" said King Kendall to himself.

But he did not hesitate, and driving on, drew rein near her, for she held up her hand as though to address him.

She was in deep mourning, as before, and the somber veil completely hid her face.

"Well, lady, I am glad to see you again, for I feared harm had befallen you, after your strange desertion of me yesterday."

"Will you ride back to Bonanza City with me?"

"No, sir, for duty calls me here in these wilds," was the reply, in a low, hoarse voice.

"Indeed! it is strange that one like you should consider it a duty to remain in the haunt of outlaws," said Kendall, sternly.

"I know my duty, sir, and shall abide by it; but I came here to-day to meet you."

"And for what purpose?"

"To have from you a pledge that you will at once depart from these wilds."

"No, lady, I—"

"Hear me, sir!"

"Well, lady, I am all attention."

"Your life is in danger."

"I rather like the excitement of danger."

"You are to be tracked down, and made to die a fearful, horrible death."

"It is catching before hanging, you know," was the indifferent response.

"Be warned, foolish man, and depart forever from Bonanza City and its surroundings."

"On the contrary, I shall remain there, and in its vicinity."

"Do you wish to die?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then be warned."

"Of whom?"

"It matters not."

"I'll take my chances, and I will also take the liberty of warning you, if, as I believe, you are in some way connected with the Gold Buzzards, for their end will come some day, and you will suffer with the guilty."

"I'll take my chances," was the low response.

"And so will I."

"Good-afternoon, lady," and King Kendall was about to drive on, when the woman again held up her hand to check him.

"Well?"

"For God's sake, heed my warning, sir!"

"And you heed mine."

"Will you not depart, as I wish—nay, as I demand?"

"I certainly shall not."

The woman seemed about to reply, when her eyes suddenly became fixed upon something within the coach, and she said:

"I thought you were alone, sir?"

"And so I am, excepting the body of the driver in the coach that I am carrying back to bury in Bonanza City."

"And the Indian?"

"What Indian?"

"The one in the coach, sir."

King Kendall started, when out of the coach-window came the head of Red Renard, while he said:

"When coach stop, me got in to ride."

"By the gods of war, chief, but I am glad to see you, so just keep your seat, or get up with me!" cried King Kendall, delightedly.

"No; Red Renard stay here," was the reply.

"As you please, for I am glad to have you."

And turning to the veiled woman again, he bowed and said:

"Farewell, lady, and heed my warning to give up the lawless ones you seem to befriend."

"And you heed mine, for if you remain here your days are numbered," was the impressive response.

"So be it," said Kendall, and he drove on at a rapid pace.

Upon reaching the hill that descended into the canyon only a few miles from Bonanza City, King Kendall called out:

"Ho, chief! come and ride with me, for I wish to have a talk with you."

But no answer came to the call, and the miner called again.

Still no answer.

Halting quickly, King Kendall bent over and glanced into the coach.

Stark and stiff, Old Hickory sat upon the back seat; but the Indian was not there.

Something very like an oath rose to the lips of King Kendall as he made this discov-

ery, and he vented his ill-humor upon the horses, sending them along at a rattling pace, which was kept up until he drew rein at Bonanza Hall, where he was met by a tremendous crowd, who made the valley ring with cheer after cheer of welcome for, as Parson Pete expressed it:

"For Brother Kendall, ther King Bee o' ther Mines."

CHAPTER XLII.

"FUNERAL FESTIVITIES."

WHEN King Kendall drove into Bonanza City, mounted upon the box of the stage-coach, the reception that he met with proved how well Captain Bentley had sung his praises.

He raised his hat politely, sprung from the box, and returned the compliment in the fashion of the mines—that is, he invited all of the town who were present to drink at his expense.

Then he told, in a few terse words, except when dwelling upon Old Hickory, whom he spoke most highly of, the story of the run to Fairy City and back.

It was certainly a startling story, and Doctor Dick, Parson Pete and all decided that the veiled girl was none other than an accomplice of the Gold Buzzards.

The body of Old Hickory was taken out of the coach, and laid in state in the bar-room of the Bonanza Hall, King Kendall having it arrayed in a new suit of clothes, and giving *carte blanche* for a grand funeral at his expense.

Doctor Dick came to the front with a desire to pay the expenses, also, and, when King Kendall would not allow this, there was a compromise by each paying half, as he saw that the gambler really felt hurt at not being able to "set up the funeral," as one of the miners had it.

The same individual partook so freely of spiritual comfort, at the bar of Bonanza Hall, that he entered upon an outspoken obituary of the dead man, which, if not true, was certainly well meant.

"Thet stiff thet lies thar, his bloomin' countenance tarned up toward glory," he began, "and lookin' so peaceful an' natural with his weepins buckled around him, were one o' ther whitest men in ther mines."

"A leetle child c'u'd lead him, ef he were drunk, and when he got on ther war-path he were a howlin' streak o' lightnin'."

"Yer won't find no treasures he laid up on yarth, fer it wasn't in him; but he hes piled 'em up Above, whar no Gold Buzzards kin snatch 'em from him."

"Thet man died at his post o' duty, a-sittin' on ther box o' ther old hearse, and ef he hain't goin' ter git a send-off ter kingdom-come by his pards, then no pilgrim ever got sent thar accordin' ter grief."

"This ar' occashin are a painful one fer us, pards; but it are a picnic fer him, fer this town o' Bonanza City are goin' ter tarn itself loose on his buryin'."

"It are a picnic fer us too, pard, fer thet King Bee o' ther mines an' Doctor Dick hev give orders ter sarve all free with tickets ter-day in honor o' ther occasion; but it are hoped thet nobody will git too drunk ter be at ther buryin'," interrupted a miner, and this joyful news, regarding a free bar, caused a general stampede "ter take su'thin'."

There was a brass band in Bonanza, for some of the musical denizens of the mines had gathered together and formed what they called the "Golden Note Band of Bonanza."

The trouble of the band was that it had too many in it for perfect harmony; but any man who wanted to join, joined, as a means of avoiding revolver "music," he being permitted to do so.

As a result there were three base drums, a drum and fife corps, seven trombones, several violins and any number of other instruments.

Realizing that it required wind to brace up against the base drums, the horn-blowers did their level best.

The uniform of the band was unique, for it consisted of a red woolen shirt, black pants, stuck in top-boots, a belt of arms and a slouch hat of any color or size.

This band had turned out for Old Hickory's funeral, and its numbers were almost equaled by the pall-bearers, for, as coffins were not "the style" in Bonanza City, the body was set upon the box of the

stage-coach; ropes being attached, the pall-bearers, as they called themselves, caught hold and dragged the vehicle out to the cemetery.

All not in the band, and the pall-bearer brigade, carried a pick upon the shoulder, with the exception of King Kendall, Doctor Dick and the few women and children of the town.

No, there was another small party that had a funereal look about them.

This was nothing more or less than Rattler's pall-bearers in reality, for that he should not be disappointed, a shutter had been secured, and placing the stage-driver upon it, eight men seized hold and bore him along to the burying of the man whose post he had so well filled.

As for Parson Pete, he was happy.

Some time before a consumptive Episcopal minister had come to Bonanza, staying there in a tour for his health.

In dying in the tavern he had willed to Parson Pete what the boys called his "pious outfit," which consisted of a valise of clothing of a clerical cut and the white surplice worn by the deacon in that church.

This surplice, although his "persuasion was Methodist" as he said, he donned for the occasion.

With his pants stuck in his boot-tops, large spurs on his heels, for though he seldom rode he always wore spurs, and his high silk hat, battered and jammed and old style, his make-up was severely unique, especially when it is taken into consideration that he wore a belt of arms beneath the surplice.

King Kendall and Doctor Dick were elected "chief mourners," and were made to mount their horses and ride behind the "hearse," and excepting the corpse and Rattler, they were the only riders.

The "hearse" had been draped with all the black to be found in the town, and, when the somber material had given out, red had been used, as indicative of the blood shed on the occasion of Old Hickory's taking off.

Could the old man have only been there in spirit to witness his own funeral he would doubtless have felt proud of the honor done him, for no such turn-out had ever been witnessed in Bonanza City before.

The mines had been emptied, and all the town was there, and two by two they started for Kingdom Come Cemetery.

Parson Pete, his surplice fluttering in the wind, led the way with solemn step.

Then came the band, and the mountains fairly quaked as they blew and rolled forth "The Girl I Left Behind Me," for they knew no dirge to play.

Then came Rattler on his shutter, propped up to see the sights, and next the stage-coach, blooming in black and red, and with Old Hickory on the box seated between two miners, who did duty as "supports."

Next rode Doctor Dick and King Kendall, and they tried hard to look serious on this sad occasion.

The women and children, about a hundred in number, followed, and then came the miners, their picks upon their shoulders, and many of them with an unsteady tread.

The bartenders were all there, too, and this accounted for the presence of all the miners, as had there been a bar open, some might have foregone the pleasure of a trip to the cemetery.

Away from the deserted camps the strange procession filed, and ascending the hillside, entered the cemetery.

This was a pretty spot situated over the town, and commanding a superb view of the valley and mountains, though the eyes of its denizens were sightless to the views.

It was a village of the dead, looking down upon a village of the living, and the pines sighed above those who rested beneath the sod.

There were many graves there, several hundred, with rude head-boards in which were cut the names and dates of the deaths of those who lay beneath.

Also the manner of their taking off.

A child's board had on it:

"DIED O' COLIC."

A woman's head-board informed the lookers-on that

"She slipt on ther ice and broke her neck."

A few had died of fever, several had been "drowned in ther river," but the "great

majority" had "died with their boots on" in a personal encounter.

The names of those who had been thus "snatched from life" were unique, to say the least, for their head-boards bore the *sobriquets* by which they were known in the mines, and the reader can well imagine reading how "Limpin' Ike," "Jew Mose," "Wild Sam," and others of that ilk lay beneath.

Parson Pete was a man of great importance in Bonanza City, and he made those about him know it, and "run a funeral accordin' to ther text," as he would say.

He now directed all proceedings, and while the band was playing "Johnny Comes Marching Home," he had Old Hickory yanked from his lofty perch and prepared for burial.

This preparation consisted in wrapping a blanket about the body, and setting the men to digging a grave.

The grave was dug with a dispatch by "volunteers" that showed familiarity with such work.

Then the body was lowered with lariats into its earthen home, while the band appropriately played "John Brown's Body."

The parson then held up his hands for silence, and, excepting a miner who had laid down and gone to sleep on the outskirts of the crowd, and was snoring like a buffalo bull, all was quiet.

"Brother pards, yer has gathered together here fer a sad duty," began Parson Pete, in his stentorian tones.

"It are ter bury a brother, and one who did his duty."

"A man who does his duty on this 'arth are no gerloot, no slouch, no dead-beat, and Providence hain't goin' ter be hard on him in ther next world."

"In thet tomb lies one o' Bonanza's great citizens, and a shining light to ther community, fer when yer wanted him, yer knew jist whar ter find him—"

"In ther bar o' ther Free and Easy," said a miner, who took Parson Pete's remark practically, and was half drunk with grief and as much more with whisky.

King Kendall and Doctor Dick could hardly keep back a burst of laughter at this *apropos* remark of the drunken miner, but no one else seemed to apply it, and Parson Pete went on:

"When a man are kilt, he are dead, and thet are the case with our lamented brother; but he were kilt by them as is our inemies, and it are our duty ter git even with 'em fer it."

A low murmur of assent, very threateningly ran through the crowd at this, and betokened no good to the Gold Buzzards.

From that on Parson Pete continued in the same strain, and then the band played "Good News from Home," and Parson Pete followed with a prayer in which he spoke of the lamented brother being "snatched ter glory" and other like expressions.

Then the band struck up, "Johnny's Gone for a Soldier," and the procession started back, the stage-coach doing duty as a "Black Maria" for a dozen miners too much overcome by grief, or otherwise, to walk back to the bars.

That night nearly the whole town got drunk, quarrels were frequent, several shooting scrapes took place, and the "funeral festivities" over Old Hickory had ended.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DOCTOR DICK'S STORY.

AFTER the bustle of the funeral and day were over, King Kendall retired to his room in Bonanza Hall.

It was the best room in the tavern, in a wing that overlooked the river and was on the first floor.

The young miner had kept his eyes open during the day to pick out a man whom he thought would be the one for his comrade upon the trail to the Death Mountains.

He had sounded several upon the subject, but found, though they would have gone alone with him to hunt down the Gold Buzzards, they would not go with a hundred men into the haunted region of the Lost Gold Mine.

At last he decided to ask Doctor Dick, for he was just the man if he would go.

Digger Dan and his three comrades had gone off, no one knew where, so he could

not again urge any one of them to accompany him, though he had hopes that Denver Dick might have been prevailed upon to do so.

Upon having made up his mind to ask Doctor Dick, he left his room, and passing out through the bar went toward the Free and Easy.

A boisterous crowd was in the bar, and among them was one man whom the young miner did not observe.

But that individual started at the sight of the "King Bee," as the miners now dubbed Kendall, and at once followed him.

When Kendall entered the Free and Easy saloon, the one on his track was not far behind.

Doctor Dick was found watching a game of cards, and there was a noisy party in his saloon, drinking, gambling, swearing and discussing the festive funeral of Old Hickory.

Seeing Kendall enter, a shout of welcome was given him, and Doctor Dick went forward to greet him.

"Can we have a chat alone, Doc?" asked Kendall.

"Certainly, my gallant King Bee of the Mines; come to my room," answered Doctor Dick, who had taken a great fancy to the young miner.

He led the way into what was the cosiest room in Bonanza City, and motioned to Kendall to take an easy-chair.

Then he opened a bottle of wine, placed a box of cigars before them on the table, and said pleasantly:

"Now preach, King Bee."

"Doctor, I have come to ask you your opinion of this Lost Gold Mine?"

"Well, King Bee, I'll give it in a word as I know it.

"Some years ago, when I first came to Bonanza, it was a place of a hundred souls, and among them was an old man whom I knew to be a gentleman.

"He seemed to have had a streak of bad luck, and lived in a cabin that stood where the Kingdom Come Cemetery now is.

"His only pard was an Indian, the Red Renard, and he bothered no one.

"The old man was called the Hermit Miner, and one day he went off and did not return for a month or more.

"When he did he had plenty of gold, and said he had 'struck it rich.'

"The boys tried to trail him to his mine, but his comrade, the Indian, always threw them off the scent.

"Some months passed, the old man and red-skin making monthly pilgrimages to Bonanza City, and invariably dodging those who followed them.

"One day Rattler, on his run in on the coach, found the old man dead by the roadside, a bullet in his heart.

"He had been murdered and robbed by some one, but no one knew, or particularly cared who.

"The Indian soon after came to Bonanza in search of him, and he went on terribly when told of the fate of his pale-face pard.

"There were some who said that the Indian was his murderer; but that didn't gain belief, as there was no motive for it, if he knew where the mine was.

"These men set to work to track the red-skin, who always had plenty of gold.

"But they gave it up, for the cunning fellow always threw them off the scent.

"Bands of miners also started out to find the gold mine of the old Hermit Miner, and returned unsuccessful, and telling strange stories about the mountains being haunted.

"Always several of the different parties would be mysteriously killed, get drowned, thrown from their horses, or meet some fearful fate, and the miners called the country the Death Mountains, or Fatal Hills.

"Red Renard was offered vast sums to give up his secret, but refused.

"Thus the matter stood, the miners believing that the mountains were indeed haunted, and at last giving up the search for the Lost Mine.

"You organized a party, Kendall, to start on the hunt, so you know all else I can tell you."

King Kendall listened attentively to the story of Doctor Dick, and then said:

"I will tell you just what I saw and went through there," and he made known fully the adventures which had befallen him.

"By Heaven, Kendall, you have a nerve and heart of iron, for I never would have remained there after seeing what you did."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Doc, for I wished to ask you to return there with me and hunt down this mystery."

"I would see you— No, I beg pardon; I mean I would never go."

"Are you superstitious?"

"No, and yes; the fact is, Kendall, I am here because I committed a red deed once.

"In a drunken quarrel I killed my best friend, and his ghost, spirit, or whatever you may call it, I saw for years afterward every night."

"Imagination."

"It may have been, but I suffered as though it was real.

"I came here, and was willing to throw my life away, for it was a most wretched existence I led.

"My recklessness made me a hero. I began to like the wild life I led, found pleasure in gambling, made money, and though I live with remorse for my act, I take matters as they come.

"Still I dread the dead, as often as I am brought face to face with death, and burn a lamp all night in my room, that I may not see what the darkness reveals, if you can understand that paradox.

"You know that I do not fear mortal man; but I never go alone into the night, for that boy, my loved friend, is constantly by my side, his wistful eyes gazing into my own.

"For that reason I would not go with you, though I verily believe if you find the mine you will have an untold fortune, if I may judge from the quantities of gold which I have seen Red Renard have at all times with him."

"I thank you, Doctor, for your confidence in me; but my mind is made up, and I shall go alone."

"Don't do it, King Bee," earnestly said the Doctor.

"I have determined Doc, and there is no backing down in me.

"Now, where can I purchase a good horse?"

"I have as good a one as can be found in the mines.

"Accept him with my best wishes, and you will confer a great favor upon me; his name is Sawbones."

"As frankly as you offer him, I accept with thanks, Doctor, so where can I find him, for I start at dawn?"

"What, alone?"

"Yes, Sawbones and I."

"Well, I see there is no use in trying to dissuade you, so I will send the horse to the Bonanza Hall.

"What! must you go? Well, good-by, and if you do not think it comes ill from my lips, I say earnestly, God bless you, Kendall."

King Kendall thanked the Gambler Doctor and departed from the Free-and-Easy, going straight back to the Bonanza Hall to prepare for an early start to the Death Mountains.

CHAPTER XLIV.

RED RENARD'S SILENT WORK.

THE "stores," so called, of Bonanza City kept open late.

That is, as long as there was a prowler upon the streets, the storekeepers did not shut up, for all the purchasing was done at night, unless it was the "morning nip" at the bars, to ease an aching head after a night's debauch, under the principle that "the hair of the dog is good for the bite."

Having made out a list of just what he should need, such as an extra blanket or two, some canvas for gold-bags, ammunition and provisions, King Kendall set out to make his purchases.

Having done this he returned to his room in the tavern to pack them.

He had also purchased a pack-saddle, and consulting Parson Pete about a freight-horse, that worthy led him to his stable, where he found just the animal he wanted.

Sawbones arrived just then, and King Kendall found in the animal of the peculiar name, a superb roan, that belied his looks if he did not possess wonderful speed and bottom.

Paying a man to put his saddle and trappings in order, King Kendall returned to his room, paid his scores, and, his purchases having arrived from the stores, he set to work packing his pack-saddle.

This occupied some little time, and when at length he was ready for bed the shouts of revelry had died away and the camp was going to sleep.

Looking at his watch he saw that it was two o'clock, so he but half-undressed and threw himself down upon his bed, and almost instantly sunk to sleep.

When the King Bee departed from Doctor Dick's Free and Easy, he did not observe that he was followed.

It was by the same man that had followed him from the Bonanza Hall.

He had patiently waited outside of the Free and Easy for his reappearance, kept on his track to the tavern, then untiringly waited for him while he made his purchases at the store, saw him go to the stable and then back to his room.

The situation of the room the tracker now noted carefully, and muttered:

"I have got him now."

The room of Kendall, as I have said, overlooked the river.

Beneath the window, which was about ten feet from the ground, was the roof of a balcony, where miners were wont to sit and smoke on pleasant afternoons.

Making "stirrups" about one of the piazza-posts with his lariats, the watcher climbed to the roof and glanced toward the open window.

All was dark within.

Cautiously he slipped up to the window and listened.

The low, steady breathing of a healthy sleeper came to his ears.

Peering in, by the starlight, the man noted the position of the little bed, and then he drew a knife in his right hand and a revolver in his left.

It was evident that he meant murder.

It was also evident that he meant to do the work noiselessly if he could, but have his revolver ready for emergencies.

Then he turned and went softly to the edge of the flat roof.

It was but a jump of fifteen feet to the river, and the water was deep just there, should he have to take the leap.

It seemed to present to him a good way of hasty flight, should he have to take it for safety to himself.

Again he crept to the window and listened.

The same steady breathing met his ears.

One foot was then softly placed over, and he was preparing to draw in the other, when there came a dull thud, a cry of mingled anguish and fright, and he fell forward into the room with a shock that shook the house.

In an instant King Kendall was upon his feet, wide awake for action, and then a movement on the floor attracted his attention.

He saw that it was a prostrate form lying just beneath the window.

Then came a groan and a writhing of the form, and King Kendall coolly struck a match, just as Parson Pete bustled into the room with:

"Brother Kendall, are thar a 'arthquake in yer room, fer I war goin' ter bed and heerd a mighty racket?"

Parson Pete was in night-shirt and night-cap, and did not look unlike a ghost.

He carried a candle in his hand, and Kendall laughed at sight of him, while he said:

"The noise awoke me, Parson Pete, and there lies the cause of it— Hal he meant business, for there are his knife and revolver, and see! this arrow killed him, for he is dead now."

He drew a long arrow from the man's back as he spoke, and Parson Pete cried:

"It are an arrer of ther Red Renard, ther Sioux miner."

"Yes, for here is his mark, a red fox; but I thank him for his silent and deadly work, as he has saved my life, for this man meant to kill me."

"I doesn't know him, King Bee."

"I do," was the quiet reply.

"Who are he?"

"One of a trio I had trouble with at Fairy

City, about Old Hickory's body over in the coach.

"He tracked me here to get even, and the Red Renard has called in his chips."

"I shall keep this arrow as a souvenir."

And King Kendall returned to his bed, leaving the intended assassin lying where he had fallen, Parson Pete promising to see him buried in the morning.

A sleep of three hours, and King Kendall arose, carried out his pack-saddle, and soon after rode off alone to follow the haunted trail to the bitter end, for his destination was the Death Mountains, where he had seen so much of mystery, which he was now resolved upon solving or losing his life in the attempt.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE VAILED WOMAN UNVAILED.

WHEN the veiled woman—the fellow-passenger of King Kendall in the stage-coach at the time of the attack upon it by the Gold Buzzards—sprung from the vehicle and went back to face the coming outlaws, she had a motive in it which will now be explained.

In looking from the coach-window the woman had suddenly uttered a startled cry, for in the leader of the Gold Buzzards, as the smoke and dust lifted an instant, she recognized one she had long wished to find.

Instantly she made up her mind to act, and watching her chance as the coach went slow up the hill, she opened the door as King Kendall leaned out the other side, and sprung to the ground.

Throwing her veil from her face, she suddenly confronted the Gold Buzzards, her arms upraised to call them back.

The leader beheld her act and gave a loud command to halt.

Then, as the stage rolled on he threw himself from his horse and cried:

"My God! Queen, what are you doing here?"

"Father above! Kent, my poor, lost brother! you the leader of the Gold Buzzards?" she cried, shrinking from him.

"There is no need of denying it."

"Yes, I am Captain Kit."

"Kent Kittredge, for shame that you should have fallen so low."

"Oh, brother, brother!"

He seemed moved at her deep distress, and said hastily:

"You have caused me to lose the coach, Queen, but I forgive you, so come with me to my camp."

He left his men to look after those who were wounded, placed her upon a horse, and the two started alone toward the Buzzards' Nest.

"Brother, what does this mean, for though I knew you had sinned, I did not believe you had come to this?" she asked as they rode along side by side.

"Queen, luck went against me, and I took to the road and have made a fortune out of it."

"A fortune which you robbed other people of, and every dollar of which is stained with blood."

"We will not discuss that, Queen; but tell me how it is that I find you here, when I believed you were—"

He paused, and she said:

"Speak out, brother; say where you believed me to be—in the penitentiary."

"Yes."

"No, I was sent there for life, as you know, and yet I remained but six months, for one night the keeper came to me and let me out of my cell, giving me money and telling me to go where I pleased."

"I believed that you had befriended me, Kent; then I thought it must be father; but you I heard not of, other than that you had come West, and father was lying ill, and was failing steadily, when he felt that his daughter was in prison for life."

"But I sent him word of my escape, he joined me, and we came here together to hide ourselves from the world forever, and also try to find you."

"Now, Kent, I have been trying to seek you that you might acknowledge your crime to our father, and not let him die believing me guilty."

"Bah," was the contemptuous response of the young outlaw.

"Kent Kittredge, I have come to lay your

crime once more before you, and ask you to do your duty by me before father," and the woman drew rein, the two halting near a huge rock by the trail.

"My twin brother, that you unfortunately are, you are as unlike me in character as daylight and darkness."

"You were wild, reckless, got into money difficulties, and, to extricate yourself, sacrificed me."

"You knew that I loved King Kendall with all my heart, and because after he had cramped himself to lend you money, and then disowned you as a friend, for your faults, you sought to get revenge."

"You took advantage of his departure for his ranch in Texas, when you knew he would be gone for months, to give me, as you said, proofs that he was false to me."

"You also urged his old father, weak in mind from the fall he got from his horse, to offer to marry me, telling him that I loved him and not his son."

"You know that father then became embarrassed in his fortune, through your acts, and you sold me to poor old Mr. Kendall to pay for the losses."

"He gave me before our marriage, the money to pay father's liabilities for you, and made his will in my favor, making father executor, and cutting off his son."

"By this you knew you would handle the fortune, as you were aware that father yielded to you in all things, and still believed in your honor against all proofs to the contrary."

"Have you forgotten, Kent Kittredge, the very night before I was to be sacrificed to that old weak-minded man, what happened?"

"It was said at the trial that I visited his home, and remained several hours, there dismissing his valet."

"The next day he was found dead, and the *post-mortem* proved that he had choked to death."

"The will was in my favor; I had visited his room, and I suffered."

"Yes, rather than tell on you, and see you hang, Kent Kittredge, I said nothing."

"I did not say that you, with your womanly face and form, dressed in my clothes, and resembling me strangely, had gone to that old man's home and murdered him."

"You escaped, and I was sentenced to prison for life, a felon, a convict, in the eyes of the law."

"But I was aided to escape, and came here, as I said, with my father."

"We sought a home in the Death Mountains, and there have since dwelt."

"But I feared father might die, believing me guilty, so I came away to hunt you up, and I have found you."

"And more, Kent Kittredge, I now know who it was that aided my escape."

"Who was it?" gasped the guilty brother.

"King Kendall."

"I half thought it."

"Yes, he aided me to escape, and he has followed me here, for he it was who kept you and your cut-throats at bay to-day."

"He did not know me, but I recognized him."

"He is on my trail, I know, but for what reason God only knows."

"Now, Kent Kittredge, I demand of you that you return with me to my father and confess all."

"Then you can go your way, for I care not."

"You said you dwelt in the Death Mountains?"

"Yes."

"You have heard where the Lost Gold Mine is that is said to be there?"

"Yes, I know the mine."

"You know it?"

"Yes."

"Thank God!"

"Hold on, Kent Kittredge, for my knowledge will do you no good."

"That mine belonged to an old man, who, after finding it was murdered."

"He left it to an Indian, who now owns it, I believe."

"Father and myself have also a mine, and a rich one."

"To keep people away from us we have descended to trickery, and we have caused the rumors to go out that the Death Mountains are haunted."

"In this the Indian has aided us, though he did not do so intentionally to help us."

"He knows that we live in the mountains, and yet, though I saved his life, he does not come near us."

"Where he dwells I do not know; but I warn you not to attempt to invade his territory."

"Miners have come there, and he has met them and driven them back, and death has overtaken them."

"Miners came a short while since, and I led them to believe that the mountains were haunted, for, as fast as they built a bridge across Lightning River, I sawed it away, first creeping near and rendering them unconscious with chloroform."

"I cast it in the air, at a distance, and then crept nearer and nearer until they felt its influence, and my work was then easy."

"They fled in terror from the mountains, and I have not seen them since."

"A clever trick you have been at, and playing ghost, too," the man said with a sneer.

"It was not crime, Kent."

"Do you remember one man who went there—a large fellow whom we call the Bravo?"

"Yes; he slept like a log, and I crept near and let him inhale chloroform, for I can walk almost, I was going to say, as noiselessly as a ghost."

"I took his weapons and arms, led his horse some distance off, and then let him wake up, and frightened him out of the mountains."

"And you expect me to confess my crime?"

"I do."

"I shall not only do so, but I shall devote my life now to killing King Kendall."

"Beware, Kent Kittredge."

The man laughed, and the two rode on once more, for all this time, in their excitement, they had been sitting on their horses facing each other.

On their way to the Buzzards' Nest, little more was said between them, other than for Captain Kit to repeat his threat to kill King Kendall.

Convinced that she could not make her depraved brother confess his crime to her father, the maiden stole away from the retreat the next morning, during his absence, and selecting the best horse in the corral, set out upon her return home.

On the way she heard the rumbling of wheels, and seeing the coach approach sprung from her horse and gave King Kendall the warning which the reader is aware of.

Then she set off on her return to the Death Mountains, utterly fearless though alone, for her life in those wilds had made her reckless of danger.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

WHEN King Kendall left Bonanza City, his first destination was the Indian's secret retreat in the glen.

Arriving in the vicinity without adventure, and in daylight, he staked out his horses and went on foot up the path to the secluded spot.

It was nightfall when he arrived at the barrier he had built.

It was still there, but the horses had gone.

Returning for his horses he determined to remain there the following day and give the place a thorough search.

He slept through the night without being disturbed, and commencing his search at the cave first, he at once made a discovery that surprised him.

Above his head was a large cavity.

Getting a torch and leading his horse into the cavern, he got up into the dark hole.

There he found the skeleton, with ropes attached, which had been his bedfellow, and had evidently been lowered from the rocky shelf to his side.

Seeing light ahead he followed it and after awhile came out at the top of the hill which the cavern pierced.

From there, down the mountain-side, through chasms in the cliffs, led a trail to the canyon, in which was the Haunted Cavern.

Going back, he found in the secret cave a number of articles, which showed that it was the hiding-place of the Indian who made it his retreat.

But this did not solve the mystery of how Red Renard, wounded severely, could be in so many different places.

Remaining that night in the retreat, King Kendall set out the next day for the Haunted Cavern.

The horses he had left in the retreat he found fenced in here by the bark-rope barrier, and Comrade greeted him with a neigh of joy.

Going on foot toward the cavern, King Kendall entered under the other side of the fall.

There he came upon a strange sight.

There lay the wounded Indian apparently much better, for he was eating his dinner.

But he was not alone, for by his side sat an Indian girl.

She was very pretty, graceful in form, and was dressed like an Indian princess, though she had evidently just cooked the meal before her and the wounded warrior.

Softly King Kendall crept toward them, the fall of the water deadening his steps.

Suddenly he appeared before them, and stood with his hands upraised in token of peace.

The girl sprung to her feet and grasped a rifle near her, but the warrior did not move, though he uttered a word of warning to the girl, and she lowered the weapon.

"I come here as your friend, as you should know."

"Can it be, no, it is impossible—you are not the Red Renard?" he said.

The Indian motioned to the girl, and said something in her own tongue.

Instantly she turned toward Kendall, and said, and in perfect English:

"He is the Red Wolf, and the twin brother of the Red Renard."

"Ah! and you?"

"I am called Juanita, and this chief is my father."

"And the Red Renard your uncle?"

"Yes."

"Where is the Red Renard?"

"He left us long days ago, after telling us not to harm you but to frighten you away from these mountains."

"I tried, but you are a brave man."

"Thank you; but why is it the Red Renard will not let me speak to him?"

"He knows best."

"Do you expect him soon?"

"He may return at any moment, but he is on a service he has devoted his life to."

"May I ask what it is?"

"We had a friend, a pale-face, who came here to live with us."

"He found a rich gold mine, and we shared it with him."

"But he was killed, and it is to find his murderer that the Red Renard devotes his life."

"The Hermit Miner left a will, making his niece his heiress, and my uncle sent the papers to his lawyers in St. Louis, and yet the one he left his mine to cannot be found. She had been in prison for murder, but escaped and fled with her father, no one knows where."

"Great God! do you know the name of this girl?" cried King Kendall.

"Queen Kittredge."

Kendall seemed deeply moved; but said, as though to himself:

"I remember that Queen had an uncle, a strange fellow and a wanderer."

"He went as a missionary among the Indians, it was said."

"Yes, he taught us English, and made an Indian lady of me," was the proud remark of the Indian girl.

"In truth he did, and the Red Renard is now trying to avenge his death, and do justice to his heir—Ha!"

Kendall started, for suddenly the Red Renard appeared before them.

The young girl sprung to his side, and his wounded brother extended his hand in warm greeting.

The resemblance between the two Indians was wonderful.

"Come, chief, you cannot dodge me longer."

"Let us be friends, for I owe much to you," and Kendall extended his hand.

With little accent the Red Renard replied:

"And I owe much to you, sir."

"For a long time I have been a detective, to trail down the murderer of my friend, Father Kittredge as we called him."

"I vowed to be friends with no man until I had done my work."

"Awhile ago I found a man on my trail, and I shot him, for I knew at last that I had run down the right one—it was the pale-face miner they called the Bravo."

"Ha! you killed him?"

"Yes, Mr. Kendall, and more, I have found the heiress to Father Kittredge's gold-mine."

"What?" almost gasped King Kendall.

"Yes, and she is the lady who rode with you in the stage."

"When I left the coach as I did, I ran along the spur, and soon came upon two persons on horseback."

"I hid behind a huge boulder, and they stopped there, and I heard all that was said, and you shall know what it was."

And Red Renard went on to tell the secret which Queen Kittredge had tried to force her brother to confess.

"Thank God—thank God! I never believed her guilty, and have sought her to tell her so."

"Come, chief, let us go and seek her!" cried King Kendall, eagerly.

The Red Renard seemed as eager to start as was the young miner, and the two set off together, leaving Juanita to still care for her father, while they sought the haunt of the beautiful girl convict who had so nobly sacrificed herself for the crime of a brother.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONCLUSION.

In a beautiful canyon of the Death Mountains was an humble but comfortable cabin.

Here dwelt, with his daughter, a man of middle age, but whose white hair and beard made him look three-score.

It was Burton Kittredge and his daughter Queen.

Seated at their little supper-table the night after the maiden's return, they little dreamed of visitors, and sprung to their feet when a loud rap came at the door.

"Who is there?" asked the old man, sternly.

"King Kendall," was the reply.

The door was thrown open, and the young miner stepped into the cabin, followed by Red Renard, whose face wore a happy smile.

"Queen, I have come for you, and to tell you I never believed you to be the murderess of my poor father."

"Now, through Red Renard, who overheard your conversation with your wicked brother, I know all."

"Your son, dressed in his sister's clothes, and not Queen, Mr. Kittredge, was the one who murdered my father."

"Come, Queen, you still hold the place in my heart you ever did, and I ask you to become my wife."

She sprung into his arms and burst into tears.

Then he felt her full weight upon him and saw that she had swooned away.

Ere long she revived, and then the four sat down to talk over the strange events that had happened in their lives, and to hear from Red Renard that Queen was the heiress to the Lost Gold Mine.

"And my poor, sinful boy, Kendall?" groaned Mr. Kittredge.

"I shall see that he is made aware that his secret is known, and at once seeks another scene, sir."

"For God's sake, do so," replied the old man.

And King Kendall did what he promised, and Captain Kit hastily left the vicinity of Bonanza City, though many of the Gold Buzzards remained to still prey upon the gold-miners, though the outlaws' most bitter foe was the Red Renard, who had proved himself such a splendid detective and so true a friend to the old Hermit Miner of the Death Mountains.

THE END.

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